

# 11/21/2013: Talkin' Hawks podcast (Iowa vs. Michigan)

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.

This week, we preview Iowa's upcoming game against Michigan, which takes place Nov. 23 at Kinnick Stadium. Former Iowa defensive back [Chris Rowell](#) joins me to provide insight on the Hawkeyes and share his thoughts on all the games featured in this week's [HawkeyeDrive.com Pick 'Em](#). Rowell will be a part of the podcast every week all season long.

Joining as a guest this week in the podcast's middle segment is Mark Snyder, who covers Michigan for [The Detroit Free Press](#). This week's edition is approximately 70 minutes long, so enjoy:

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Talkin-Hawks-podcast-11212013-Iowa-vs.-Michigan.mp3>

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

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# A unique Senior Day awaits the Morris family



Iowa linebacker James Morris (#44) helps teammates carry the Cy-Hawk Trophy following the Hawkeyes' 27-21 win over Iowa State on Sept. 14, 2013. Morris will be one of 15 senior players recognized during Iowa's Senior Day ceremony prior to the Hawkeyes' game against Michigan on Saturday, Nov. 23, 2013, at Kinnick Stadium.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

The date: Nov. 23, 2013. The time: 10:45 a.m. Central. This particular moment is one Greg Morris has spent more time preparing himself for than even he initially envisioned.

Typically, Senior Day is like any other day at work for the

Iowa football equipment manager. He may have had occasional opportunities to witness the pregame ceremony and watch players he developed special bonds with get recognized by fans and greeted on the field of Kinnick Stadium by family members. But if there was ever a task that required his assistance on those fall Saturdays, it would be just like any other game day where work needed to get done.

Morris' association with the Hawkeye program spans 35 years between being a student at the UI, a volunteer who worked during home games and then ultimately being hired full-time in 1988. Saturday will mark the 35th Senior Day Morris has witnessed at Iowa. Except this one will be uniquely different.

This Senior Day, the pregame ceremony trumps everything else happening around him. Because sometime during this 15-minute ceremony leading up to Iowa's game against Michigan, one of those 15 Hawkeye players being recognized will be Greg's son, senior linebacker and team captain James Morris.

"It's hard to believe," Greg said. "Four years ago last September, he started on special teams. You fast forward to right now, and he's three games away from ending his college career."

### **The passion and the process**

James was in fifth grade when the two first met (Greg married James' biological mother, Lynn, in 2003; both James and his younger brother Jake have since fully embraced Greg as their father). Growing up in the nearby Iowa town of Solon, James and Jake would both join Greg down at the Hayden Fry Football Complex whenever they didn't have school. Greg said the two boys would help him with chores like recycling cardboard boxes whenever Nike shipments arrived.

James said he began playing organized football in sixth grade – not because he was influenced to play by Greg, but because he was simply a kid looking to have fun. As he got older, his

passion for the game reached a point to where he became focused on making it “an area of expertise.”

“It was probably more so his influence on me as a person and less about football,” James said. “I think kids are going to gravitate towards what they’re exposed to, but your interests are your interests. It wasn’t necessarily that my dad forced me to play football or I loved football because my dad worked around football.

“I think that I was exposed to it, I enjoyed it and it was something that I was passionate about. He, along with my mom, were just always very supportive of me.”

It was at Solon High School where James first made a name for himself on the gridiron. He was part of a team that won the 2007 Class 2A State Championship his sophomore year. Around that same time, a Division-I scholarship offer came from his dad’s boss, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz.

James committed to Iowa, went on to win two more state titles at Solon and then signed his national letter of intent with the Hawkeyes in 2010. As he reflected back on James’ recruitment, Greg said there was a ‘Wow’ factor with James receiving the Iowa offer as a sophomore and that it was a different process given James’ familiarity with faces inside the program.

“As each day has gone on, I think you realize how special that time was and how appreciative both Lynn and I, and I’m sure James is, of the opportunity that Kirk and his staff presented him at a young age,” Greg said. “For him to fulfill that dream and fulfill that scholarship to the best of his ability is even more special.”

## **A surreal start**

From a physical standpoint, this was a major transition period for James, one he described as “comparing apples to oranges”

as far as going from playing Class 2A football in Iowa to playing collegiately in the Big Ten. It was the mental transition James was making that left Greg at ease.

With Mondays being the players' day away from football, Greg said one of the first commitments James made in college was dedicating Mondays to taking as many classes and getting as much done academically as he possibly could. Greg attributes some of that work ethic, that mindset James possesses, to what he said was instilled in him at Solon by James' high school coach, Kevin Miller, as well as the rest of his coaching staff.

"When he got here, the football grind, he was fully aware of," Greg said. "The grind they go through in Solon is a lot like the grind here. Film study, daily commitments, stuff like that.

"That part, I think, wasn't as big a deal for him. But I think you realize – and he had to because he had to go through it – that it's long."

The date was Sept. 4, 2010. Iowa played Eastern Illinois in its first game since beating Georgia Tech in the Orange Bowl just eight months earlier. It also turned out to be James' first game as a Hawkeye, as he suited up and not only played on special teams, but even garnered some reps late in the second half with the back-up defense.

One month later, Iowa opened Big Ten play against Penn State in a prime time game played at Kinnick Stadium. Injuries decimated the Hawkeyes' linebacking corps to the point Ferentz decided James was the "next man in" and put the true freshman out there with his first defensive unit.

For those first moments James saw the field as a freshman, there stood Greg on the Iowa sidelines, left in awe by how fast everything was already unfolding.

“I’d be lying to you if I said you don’t watch,” Greg said. “Football is such a tough, sometimes violent, sport that you want him to stay healthy. So you do catch yourself watching him.

“Surreal? Yeah.”

### **Developing into a leader**

Since that October evening in 2010 when Iowa played Penn State, James has been a staple of the Hawkeye defense. He started the final six games of his freshman season at middle linebacker – including Iowa’s 27-24 win over Missouri in the 2010 Insight Bowl – and ended up fourth on the team in tackles.

Over the course of his sophomore and junior years, James accumulated 223 tackles while starting all but two games for the Hawkeyes, both of which were the result of injuries. He was named one of Iowa’s team captains when the 2012 season began and still presently holds that distinction today.

But for everything James had previously accomplished on the field before this 2013 campaign started, right now has been his best football as a Hawkeye. Following wins over both Minnesota and Northwestern, James was named the Big Ten’s Defensive Player of the Week, becoming the first Hawkeye since 2004 to receive that honor twice in one season. Entering Saturday’s game against Michigan, the 6-2, 240-pound linebacker is currently second on the team with 81 tackles. He also possesses five sacks and three interceptions, both of which are team-highs.

James’ work ethic has also enabled him to thrive in the classroom. The political science and pre-law major currently possesses a 3.84 cumulative GPA and has already been named Academic all-Big Ten each of the past two years. Just in the last month, he was named one of nine semifinalists for the [Lott IMPACT Trophy](#), as well as one of 12 finalists for the

[Wuerffel Trophy](#). On Dec. 10, James will be in New York City as one of 16 recipients of the National Football Foundation's [National Scholar-Athlete Award](#), an \$18,000 post-graduate scholarship.

"I can't think of many guys better than James that have come through here," Ferentz said. "Just everything he does, he does it in a first-class way. He's just a tremendous student."

One of James' teammates also being honored on Senior Day is free safety Tanner Miller. In fact, he's the last player to precede James during the Senior Day ceremony when they're all being introduced. Like many other past and present Hawkeyes, Miller has developed a bond himself with Greg over the past four years. Seeing the amount of work both Greg and James put into what they do around the football complex, he said the similarities between the two are quickly noticeable.

"James definitely has some Greg in him," Miller said. "They're both very detail-oriented. They're always getting things done on time and are always sticklers about that kind of thing, which is what you want."

Inside the football complex, both James and Greg are very business-like. James' mindset is becoming the best football player he can be. Greg's mindset is making sure every Hawkeye player has his equipment needs met. But they also get some opportunities when they're both there to share a few father-son moments, which James described as "a luxury."

"He's not the type of guy where if you play a great game or you win an award, that doesn't make him any more proud," James said. "I think that he's probably more worried about the type of person I am and the way I treat people and how I handle myself."

"I just enjoy the time that I have with him."

From Greg's perspective, the last four years have gone fast.

But they've been every bit as memorable as he hoped they would be when James first began his Hawkeye journey.

"The biggest joy that I've taken from this is that I get to be around him more," Greg said. "A lot of dads don't get that chance when their kids are going through college. That's the joy you get. The, 'Hi, how are you?' or 'How's school going?' or when he calls me and wants to go to lunch knowing that I'll buy."

"I'm so blessed and very lucky that Kirk and his staff offered him a scholarship and he was able to be around here for the past four years because it has been a ball."

## **Senior Day**

The date: Nov. 23, 2013. The time: 10:45 a.m. Central. This particular moment – 15 minutes before kickoff – is when the Senior Day ceremony begins. For Greg and his wife Lynn, this is when the emotions will start to kick in as they await James running out of the Kinnick Stadium tunnel to a boisterous ovation from the Hawkeye faithful.

"I think it will be full of joy," Greg said, as he attempted to envision what that moment will be like. "I'll be full of joy knowing that as each step he has evolved, he has accomplished the things he has wanted to do. He has worked hard for it."

"I'll have a great satisfaction on Saturday when his name is called, knowing that the hard work, his discipline, some of his odd, quirky things that he has chosen to do, have all paid off."

On the field, it remains to be seen what direction James' life takes him. Attending law school is very much a part of his future plans, regardless of how much football he ends up playing beyond Iowa's bowl game this winter.



No matter what happens though, James and Greg Morris will always have their father-son relationship – a relationship that will feature a very unique, yet very special moment Saturday morning inside Kinnick Stadium.

“Not many people have the opportunity to see their parents every day in college, whether they want to or they don’t,” James said. “It’s something I’ve enjoyed and I’ll miss it when it’s gone.”

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## 11/19/2013: Iowa football notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game against Michigan during his weekly press conference held Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – The scene last year was ugly, perhaps as grotesque a scene as there has ever been following an Iowa football game during the Kirk Ferentz era.

In the penultimate game of a disastrous 2012 season, the Hawkeyes' visit to "The Big House" in Ann Arbor, Mich., was more like a trip to the slaughterhouse, as they got carved apart by Michigan to the tune of a 42-17 final. That defeat sealed Iowa's fate last season, as it was the seventh loss of the year and it made the Hawkeyes miss out on bowl eligibility for the first time since 2000.

As Iowa prepares for its first game against the Wolverines since that ominous afternoon in Ann Arbor, the improvements made over the past year by the Hawkeyes have been enough in terms of returning to respectability. Not only did Iowa (6-4, 3-3) secure a bowl game after winning its last time out against Purdue on Nov. 9, but now the Hawkeyes are in a position to better themselves and possibly even move ahead of Michigan (7-3, 3-3) in the Big Ten pecking order with a win in their final game at Kinnick Stadium this fall.

"We feel better now than we did last year, but we've got two games left – two really big games – and this week, we're just focusing on Michigan," senior linebacker James Morris said. "We know if we don't win this week, it makes the season less special in retrospect."

One of the major questions coming out of the bye week for Iowa will be how it goes about using its depth at running back, which could play a significant factor Saturday with an expected wind chill temperature of 12 degrees come kickoff at 11 a.m. Central. In that 38-14 victory over the Boilermakers, the Hawkeyes rushed for 318 yards on the ground. Sophomore running back Jordan Canzeri – who has been the No. 3 back behind juniors Mark Weisman and Damon Bullock all season long – accounted for 165 of those rushing yards on 20 carries.

Ferentz said while Canzeri might be the freshest of his running back options, he believes the bye week came at a good time for players like Weisman and Bullock.

“I won’t say they’re worn down, but like our whole team, I think everybody gets a little bit tired as the year goes on,” Ferentz said. “It’s a long season. Last week gave our guys a chance to maybe get their legs back. Hopefully, that’s the case.”

### **Facing Gardner again**

If the Hawkeyes were the meat being butchered in that slaughterhouse last year, the Wolverine player doing a huge chunk of the butchering was quarterback Devin Gardner. In what was only his third career start as Michigan’s signal-caller, Gardner accounted for 351 yards of total offense and all six of the Wolverines’ touchdowns that day, en route to being named Big Ten Offensive Player of the Week.

Through the air, Gardner was 18-of-23 passing for 314 yards and threw three touchdown passes. His other three touchdowns all came on the ground while rushing for 37 yards on nine carries. Michigan was also working his predecessor, Denard Robinson, back into the line-up and the two of them both had their way with the Hawkeyes.

“That game last year, they caught us off guard a little bit with what they did,” senior free safety Tanner Miller said.

Gardner is now a junior and has led a Michigan offense that has been inconsistent for most of the season. The struggles have been even more magnified this month in the Wolverines’ losses to Michigan State and Nebraska, as well as their most recent contest – a 27-19 win over Northwestern that took three overtimes to accomplish. In those last three games, Gardner has just two touchdown passes and only one rushing touchdown. Not only that, but he has also had minus-59 yards rushing in those three contests while being sacked 19 times.

Part of the reason for the high number of sacks has been the ability of opposing defenses to effectively blitz Gardner when he drops back to throw. Ferentz downplayed the idea that Iowa might blitz more than usual on Saturday, but he also made clear that getting pressure on Gardner is a must if the Hawkeyes are going to be emerge victorious on Saturday.

“The issue for us is we’re not a big blitz team. Our percentages are probably way lower than most people,” Ferentz said. “Typically for us to get there, we’ve got to get there with our front four. That is an area we need to improve on.

“It’s going to be a challenge. But we certainly can’t let him get comfortable back there and we can’t let him get outside, either. He did that a few times last year and we paid for it.”

If there is a positive Iowa is attempting to find out of what happened last season, it might simply be the fact that the Hawkeyes have experience facing Gardner unlike most of Michigan’s opponents this season. As a result, they’re hoping that prior experience – as unpleasant as it was for them – can be of benefit preparing for him this time around.

“He’s a different kind of mobile than some of the other quarterbacks we have played,” Morris said. “More of his success I think is when he does things on his own as opposed to designed runs.

“He’s probably more organic in that sense, so that’s a different challenge for us.”

## **Senior Day**

The last three Senior Days have been unpleasant ones for the Hawkeyes, who haven’t won a home finale at Kinnick Stadium since their Orange Bowl season of 2009.

Iowa will recognize its 15 seniors before kickoff Saturday. Among them will be guys like Morris and Miller, who have both

been staples of the Hawkeye defense for the majority of their careers (Morris becoming a starter as a true freshman and Miller becoming a starter early in his sophomore campaign).

The defensive side of the football will be most notable, as all three of Iowa's starting linebackers – Morris, Christian Kirksey and Anthony Hitchens – are playing their final games at Kinnick Stadium on Saturday. Morris and Kirksey have started together for each of the past three seasons, while Hitchens became the starting WILL 'backer last season as a junior, when he led the Big Ten with 124 tackles.

"They're really good team-oriented guys," Ferentz said of his three senior linebackers. "All three of them are just tremendous that way. Good with the younger guys, good with the older guys. Anything that we're doing, they're in the front. I'm talking about things away from football, too.

"We've had some really outstanding guys at that position and these three guys have really done a nice job of leaving their mark here."

There's also the possibility that defensive end Dominic Alvis could return for his final home game Saturday. Alvis injured his back last month against Michigan State and hasn't played any defensive snaps since the first series of Iowa's 34-24 loss at Ohio State on Oct. 19.

Among the offensive players to get recognized Saturday will be right tackle Brett Van Sloten (who has been one of the Hawkeyes' captains all season) and tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz, who has a team-high four touchdown receptions this season.

Then there's special teams. Mike Meyer took over kicking duties as a true freshman in 2010 and has been Iowa's place-kicker ever since. Meyer had endured plenty of ups-and-downs as a specialist, but enters his final home game 14-of-18 on field goal attempts this season and a perfect 31-of-31 on PATs.

He reflected back on what was perhaps his biggest down as a Hawkeye – missing a pair of field goals during a 22-21 loss to Minnesota in 2011. A sophomore at the time, Meyer said it was as distraught as he had felt about himself at any point in his career and that a conversation with then-center James Ferentz at the time helped make change his outlook permanently.

“I think that was kind of the point where I felt like my teammates were still behind me,” Meyer said. He added that the biggest takeaways for him during his career have been becoming mentally tougher in addition to being detailed.

Meyer isn't the only special teamer making his final Kinnick appearance Saturday. For the last three seasons, Casey Kreiter has handled all of the Hawkeyes' long-snapping duties – whether it's a punt, a field goal or a PAT.

Kreiter said his among his biggest takeaways will be what he described as “bits and pieces” of games, such as making his first start in Iowa's 34-7 win over Tennessee Tech in 2011 when the game featured a weather delay. He also said that for him playing long-snapper, it has always been “a science” that consists of the following – practicing, playing, analyzing his practice and play and then fixing it.

“You're always putting money in the bank or taking it away. There's no staying level,” Kreiter said. “If you're going to stay level, you're going to be complacent and complacency is not a good thing.

“I told someone if I ever get to the point in anything I do where I say, ‘That's the best I can do. I can't do better than that,’ I need to stop doing what I'm doing.”

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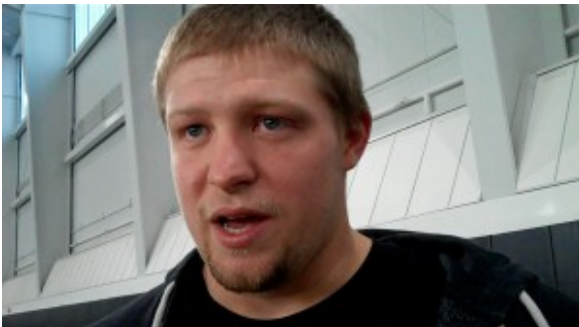
# 11/19/2013: Iowa player audio with photos (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

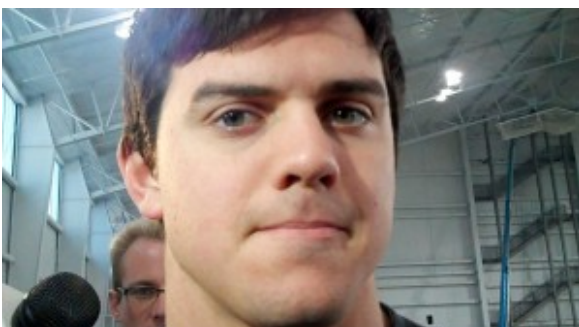
IOWA CITY, Iowa – On Tuesday, four senior members of the Iowa football team spoke with the media to discuss the Hawkeyes' upcoming game on Nov. 23 against Michigan at Kinnick Stadium, on what will be Senior Day for those four players and 11 of their other teammates.

Below is audio from each of the following senior players – long snapper Casey Kreiter, linebacker James Morris, free safety Tanner Miller and kicker Mike Meyer:



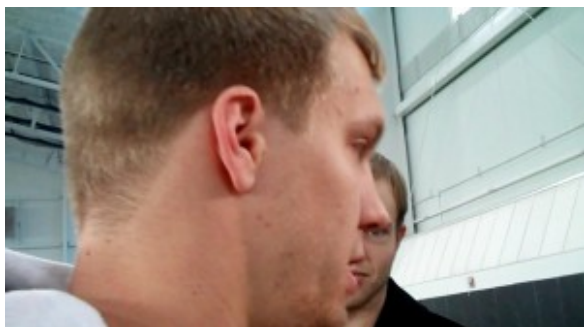
Casey Kreiter, Nov. 19, 2013

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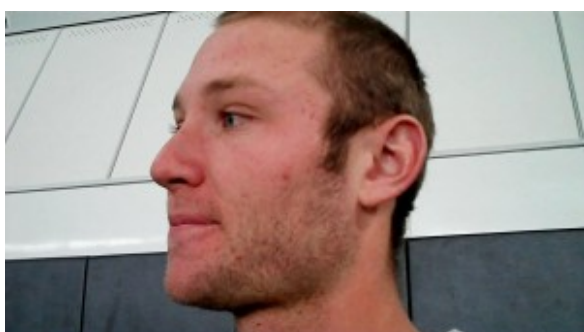
James Morris, Nov. 19, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/James-Morris-11192013.mp3>



Tanner Miller, Nov. 19, 2013

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Mike Meyer, Nov. 19, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Mike-Meyer-11192013.mp3>

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# **11/19/2013: 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 19 13](#)

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# **11/19/2013: 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:**

*"It was a little different certainly for us to have a bye week this late in the season and it probably came at a good time. It gave a few guys the chance to get healed up a little bit and also start getting ready, so we had a good week and we're eager to get back out on the field today and really start our preparation for this week's game."*

## **On what Iowa's senior class this year has done for the program:**

*"You know, I've been talking about these guys really since August. They've done a wonderful job leading our football team through the out-of-season, certainly through spring practice and camp and they continue to do so. It's always a bittersweet*

day I think for all college coaches and teammates. It's a celebration of a lot of good things.

*"Obviously, none of them are done yet, but a lot of good things have happened in the past and then obviously it's a little bittersweet knowing that they're not going to be around much longer. So it's a very, very special day and we've got a really good group of guys. They've done a nice job and we're very, very proud of all those guys."*

**On if it's fair to say he's as concerned with Michigan QB Devin Gardner's feet as he is his arm:**

*"Yeah, we are. If you go back, I'm just glancing at the Penn State thing here recently a few minutes ago and I think he rushed for 150 yards in that ball game. You know, he's just a guy that can hurt you in a lot of different ways. He was responsible for 350 yards of offense against us last year, so we certainly didn't have the answers a year ago, that's for sure. We'll try to work on that this week and see if we can put up a little bit better front."*

**On whether the visits to the UI Children's Hospital he has the players do regularly provides them with perspective:**

*"Yeah, I think there are an awful lot of ways and I'm sure a lot of people in college athletics do the same thing. We had a bye week last week, so we had some visitors over on Thursday. It's a totally different story, certainly. But with the Children's Hospital only a couple hundred yards from our facility here, it's a real benefit for us and you hear a lot of nice things back from the patients and their families, their appreciativeness."*

*"But I think it's just as important for all of us. It's just a constant reminder of how lucky we are. If you're a college athlete or a college coach, you're doing it because a) you choose to, and then b) you're able to. Not everybody is as fortunate or has the fortune to be able to say those things"*

*that they are doing. So it's really a great reminder and I think it keeps things in perspective for our guys, hopefully."*

**On how he went about scheming for Wisconsin's tailbacks and if each guy presents a different challenge:**

*"Yeah, I mean, they're a little bit different. Just two thoughts – I thought we did a good job overall stopping the run for 50 minutes. Then the last 10 minutes, it was a little bit of a different story. Two parts to that story – you have to play the full 60 obviously, but we didn't do enough offensively to help our defense. You know, sooner or later, if you're not careful, they're going to break through on you because they're very, very good."*

*"But I think the two understated things about Wisconsin are No. 1, their defensive play. They make it very hard on you and as a result, their offense, they get to keep cracking at you and that's a tough, tough task. And then I think James White's career is kind of interesting. You know, everybody talks about [Melvin] Gordon and rightfully so. He's a tremendous football player and a year ago, they had about as good a running back as we've seen in our conference with [Montee] Ball."*

*"But you know, for the last four years, White has just been extremely productive. He has done it in a great way and he has done a lot of things for them and does them awfully well. So it's kind of like he's flying under the radar, which is interesting because he's one heck of a football player."*

**On if he would say Gordon has more speed than White when comparing the two Badger backs:**

*"Yeah, I guess. I guess he has maybe had more big plays. Got to watch some TV on Saturday and saw White pop out for 92-93 yards, whatever that was. So they're both excellent backs and Ball was an excellent back. It's just a credit to them."*

**On what the most improved unit on his team is through this**

**point in the season:**

*"The first thing that pops into my mind is our defensive line. You know, we would have a hard time and did have a hard time just about against everybody last year. We were just awfully inexperienced. We knew that going into the season. We had two seniors who had never played. You know, this year we're not a lot older chronologically. We have one senior who has basically missed our Big Ten schedule. He hasn't played this year in the Big Ten very much.*

*"But we have guys that play right now, guys like Louie Trinca-Pasat, who maybe personifies the whole group. You know, he took his lumps last year. But he's playing pretty, pretty stoutly right now and gives us great leadership. You think about a guy like him and I think of him kind of like I think of Matt Kroul, who flew under the radar. We talked about Mitch King, but Matt Kroul was one of the real key components of our defensive teams several years ago and I think Louie is kind of that guy, too.*

*"We're not flashy, that's for sure. But those guys have been real productive and I believe are leaps and bounds better than a year ago and that's a positive."*

**On how he feels about his current and future depth along the D-line:**

*"Well, you know, we're thin there like we are at every position. That's just kind of the nature of our team, typically. Even our best teams have been that way. So we're constantly trying to bring other guys along and it just never ends."*

**On what he sees from Michigan when he watches the Wolverines on film while preparing for this week's game:**

*"You know, a very talented team. They're very dangerous. They're very well-coached. They've had a couple of ups-and-*

downs, but you know, you don't have to look back too far to see a lot of their ups. Again, I think for us, if you just go back to last year, their quarterback had 350 yards of offense against us. I mean, we didn't even really put up a fight. I can't remember how many points they did score. I'm trying to forget that. But it could have been a lot worse, I know that, if they had chosen to.

"So they're very potent and they're very well-coached on defense. They've got a lot of young players that are doing a good job and if you just look at the running back that jumped in last week, he didn't have 100 [yards] rushing in the game, but it looked like he had 150 just watching the tape. I mean, he's a really, really good player and they've got another guy with him. So they've got a lot of good young players who are really making progress and coming on.

"You know, we're going to have to be at our absolute best to have a chance here."

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## **11/19/2013: 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.)

Last week after Iowa became bowl-eligible, I made an attempt at putting together some revised bowl projections from what I had previously. Some shake-up has taken place since those [projections were posted on Nov. 13](#), so I figured I'd offer up a revision of that revision here this week (*Yes, this is one day earlier than I initially planned to post these projections*).

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

### **1) Big Ten gets two BCS teams**

*Last week, I felt certain the Big Ten was only going to end up with one BCS team this season after Stanford defeated Oregon. I'm singing a different tune now. Stanford's loss to USC over the weekend puts Oregon back in the driver's seat to win the Pac-12 and that at-large spot I had the Ducks taking in the Orange Bowl is now open again. For now at least, I believe a second Big Ten team will be playing in South Florida on Jan. 3.*

### **2) Still only seven Big Ten teams**

*This will become a formality over the weekend after Michigan State and Ohio State lock up their respective division titles on Saturday because both Northwestern and Indiana would have seven losses and become ineligible for bowl games. With a second Big Ten team in a BCS bowl, every team left over would be moving up one slot in the pecking order. This leaves the Big Ten with two vacant spots in the Heart of Dallas Bowl (where I previously had Iowa) and the Little Caesars Bowl, respectively.*

### **3) The formula behind putting this all together**

*Right now, 65 teams are already bowl-eligible and now I have a total of 78 teams reaching this mark (one more than last week), meaning eight teams are going to be left home for the*

holidays despite reaching the six-win plateau. After filling conference tie-ins, as well as placing BYU in the Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl and Navy in the Armed Forces Bowl, I was left with seven vacancies and a pool of 15 teams to fill those seven spots.

– The following seven 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) and Heart of Dallas Bowl (Big Ten tie-in)

– The following 15 teams were among those considered for the seven vacancies – (8-4): Bowling Green, Ohio, Toledo; (7-5): Maryland, Notre Dame, Western Kentucky; (6-6): Syracuse, Florida Atlantic, UTSA, Central Michigan, Arizona, Washington State, ULM, Troy and Texas State.

Seeing how I had six teams projected as finishing 7-5 or better, it was pretty easy this week to fill six of the seven vacant spots. This left one spot for a 6-6 team and nine of these teams to choose from. The one I picked to take Army’s place in the Poinsettia Bowl was Washington State, who I now believe will beat Utah. I picked Washington State over Arizona because of the head-to-head this past weekend with the Cougars beating the Wildcats (on the road, no less). Arizona and Syracuse were both teams I had bowling in last week’s projections, but now see staying home for the holidays. I also factored in bowl pay-out when filling the seven vacant spots.

Below are my projections as of Nov. 19, 2013 (the next list of bowl projections will take place either Nov. 26 or 27):

#### **BIG TEN BOWLS:**

**Rose Bowl** – Ohio State vs. Oregon

– I previously had Ohio State playing Stanford here, but as I

mentioned above, Oregon is back in the driver's seat to win the Pac-12 again after Stanford lost to USC over the weekend. As it turns out, this was my national championship prediction at the beginning of the season. Here, they'd just be meeting in the same stadium five days earlier.

### **Orange Bowl – Wisconsin vs. Clemson**

– Clemson remains in this game as my replacement for Florida State. Now there are two potentially intriguing debates to consider. The one that is obvious and will be there if everything goes as expected in the Big Ten is whether Wisconsin or Michigan State should receive that second at-large. Unless Michigan State upsets Ohio State in the Big Ten Championship Game, this is going to be the debate if Wisconsin's 10-2 and Michigan State is 11-2 with a loss to the Buckeyes. The Badgers are more likely to be in the top 14 of the final BCS Standings if this scenario unfolds, thus why I have Wisconsin in this game (it should also be noted that historically, teams that lose conference title games find themselves on the outside looking in when it comes to scenarios like this, like Michigan State two years ago).

But now here's another thing to consider. Let's say Baylor loses to Oklahoma State and because of the head-to-head, the Cowboys represent the Big 12 in the Fiesta Bowl while the Bears sit there at 11-1. Would the Orange Bowl consider taking Baylor over either a Wisconsin or Michigan State then? My guess (for now) would be no. But it might be in both the Badgers' and Spartans' best interests if Baylor wins that game in Stillwater on Saturday because I don't think a 10-2 Oklahoma State would get taken over either team.

### **Capital One Bowl – Michigan State vs. South Carolina**

– Because I have Wisconsin getting the at-large spot in the Orange Bowl, my Capital One Bowl projection remains the same with the Spartans and Gamecocks meeting in a battle of likely



conference championship game losers. A storyline worth noting, too, if this happens – Michigan State head coach Mark Dantonio is a South Carolina alum.

### **Outback Bowl – Nebraska vs. Missouri**

– Now is where you'll see teams start moving up with Wisconsin in the Orange. Here, I have Nebraska in the Outback Bowl and what do you know? A match-up against another old Big 8 foe in Missouri, who I still have in this game representing the SEC.

### **Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl – Michigan vs. Oklahoma**

– Michigan moves up to the Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl and something to keep in mind: Let's say Iowa does beat Michigan on Saturday and both teams have identical 7-5 records. Iowa would have the better conference record and head-to-head, but the Hawkeyes have also been in this game twice in consecutive years fairly recently (2010 and 2011 back when it was the Insight Bowl) and this game won't have a Big Ten tie-in anymore starting next year. Throw in the fact that Oklahoma remains my Big 12 pick to land here and I think this bowl would still pick Michigan regardless of Saturday's outcome, not just because of historical context but also because Iowa and Oklahoma just played each other in this game two years ago.

### **Gator Bowl – Minnesota vs. LSU**

– For now, this is where I have Minnesota. A very important caveat to point out here – IF the Hawkeyes win either of their final two games in addition to the Golden Gophers losing both this week to Wisconsin and next week to Michigan State, then I believe a 7-5 Iowa gets picked before an 8-4 Minnesota. Now if the Gophers win either of their final two games, the Outback and Buffalo Wild Wings Bowls both become very much in the discussion for them. If Iowa finishes 6-6, then this will be the worst-case scenario for Minnesota. On the SEC side, I still have LSU ending up here, but the Tigers may move up if

*they beat Texas A&M on Saturday or possibly even down if they don't beat the Aggies and Missouri also loses to Ole Miss.*

### **Texas Bowl – Iowa vs. Texas Tech**

*– Again, this is where I have the Hawkeyes FOR NOW. A 6-6 record virtually guarantees Iowa a trip to the Lone Star State, whether it's this game in Houston if the Big Ten has two BCS teams or the Heart of Dallas Bowl in Dallas if the Big Ten only ends up with one BCS team. If Iowa reaches 7-5 (either by beating Michigan on Saturday or Nebraska next week), I believe the Gator Bowl would then be very much in play for the Hawkeyes as long as they're within one game of Minnesota. If the Hawkeyes win out and get to 8-4, then the Outback and Buffalo Wild Wings both become possibilities.*

*Unless Texas Tech wins at Texas on Thanksgiving, the Red Raiders remain the team I see representing the Big 12 here, even though this would be their second consecutive trip to Houston. Now, the possible 11-1 Baylor vs. 10-2 Wisconsin/11-2 Michigan State debate would very much affect this game if Baylor ended up with an at-large spot over a Big Ten team. Not only would that bring every other Big Ten team down one spot, but every other Big 12 team would move up one spot and the Texas Bowl would then have a vacancy since no one else from the Big 12 is eligible now with West Virginia losing to Kansas over the weekend. This is a moot point if Baylor wins Saturday night; if Oklahoma State wins, it's something to maybe think about.*

### **THE OTHER BCS BOWLS:**

#### **BCS National Championship Game – Alabama vs. Florida State**

*– Yeah, this hasn't changed. Still think Alabama and Florida State win out and this would absolutely be the title game if that happens.*

#### **Sugar Bowl – Auburn vs. UCF**

– Because Auburn snatched victory from the jaws of defeat against Georgia last weekend, I didn't change anything as far as the SEC is concerned, so I still think (for now) Auburn gets picked as Alabama's replacement here. This projection's still the same since I have UCF winning the AAC and ending up here. Again, the AAC champion is guaranteed a BCS bowl this season, and as long as either Fresno State or Northern Illinois remains undefeated, that AAC champion is probably ending up in this game.

Now here's what could get interesting: Let's say Texas A&M wins out and is also 10-2 with Auburn after the Tigers lose to Alabama next week. Auburn has the head-to-head and having seen first-hand how Iowa's win over Penn State in 2009 got the Hawkeyes into the Orange Bowl over the Nittany Lions, I do believe the Sugar Bowl would put head-to-head into account here and take the Tigers over the Aggies. But having said that, the Johnny Manziel factor could certainly come into play because of TV, so it wouldn't be a total surprise if Texas A&M got picked over Auburn here. Obviously, if the Aggies lose either of their remaining games at LSU or at Missouri, the only thing that would then be in Auburn's way of a Sugar Bowl appearance (regardless of next week's outcome) would be South Carolina winning the SEC Championship Game.

### **Fiesta Bowl – Oklahoma State vs. Fresno State**

– Yes, I believe Oklahoma State beats Baylor on Saturday, which is why I have the Cowboys now winning the Big 12 and playing in the Fiesta Bowl instead of the Bears. I just mentioned how this particular scenario could lead to discussion of Baylor maybe getting an at-large spot, but even at 11-1, part of me has a hard time believing it would help fill Sun Life Stadium the way Wisconsin fans would, which is why (for now) I have the Badgers getting picked instead. As for Fresno State, I still believe it goes unbeaten and ends up qualifying since it'll probably be ranked higher in the BCS Standings than UCF when the season's complete.

**ALL OF THE REST:**

**New Mexico Bowl** – Oregon State vs. Colorado State

*\*Previously had San Jose State from the MWC*

**Las Vegas Bowl** – Boise State vs. USC

**Idaho Potato Bowl** – Buffalo vs. UNLV

**New Orleans Bowl** – Tulane vs. UL-Lafayette

**Beef O'Brady's Bowl** – Middle Tennessee vs. Western Kentucky\*

*\*Previously had Ohio filling the AAC vacancy*

**Hawaii Bowl** – East Carolina vs. San Jose State

*\*Previously had Colorado State representing the MWC*

**Little Caesars Bowl** – Ball State vs. Maryland\*

*\*Previously had Notre Dame filling the Big Ten vacancy*

*(Something to consider now that I have Maryland projected for a bowl unlike last week: As long as the ACC is able to fill its allotment – which it appears it will – there is absolutely no way Maryland ends up in any of its bowls given the Terrapins' pending move to the Big Ten. Even though both North Carolina and Pittsburgh could end up with worse records than Maryland, those teams are getting picked for ACC bowls before the Terps are, period. The difference between this case and Rutgers is the AAC likely isn't filling its entire allotment, so as long as the Scarlet Knights reach six wins, they'll be in a bowl with an AAC tie-in. As long as Maryland wins at least one of its two remaining games, it should end up somewhere this winter without worry.)*

**Poinsettia Bowl** – Washington State\* vs. Utah State

*\*Previously had Western Kentucky filling the Army vacancy*

**Military Bowl** – Rice vs. Pittsburgh

*\*Previously had Syracuse representing the ACC*

**Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl** – BYU vs. Washington

*\*Previously had Arizona representing the Pac-12; BYU is locked into this bowl game*

**Pinstripe Bowl** – Cincinnati vs. Notre Dame\*

*\*Notre Dame now takes the Big 12 vacancy here; previously had West Virginia representing the Big 12*

**Belk Bowl** – Houston vs. Georgia Tech

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

**Armed Forces Bowl** – San Diego State vs. Navy

*\*Navy is now locked into this bowl game after reaching eligibility over the weekend*

**Music City Bowl** – Mississippi vs. Boston College

**Alamo Bowl** – Stanford vs. Texas

*\*Previously had UCLA vs. Oklahoma State*

**Holiday Bowl** – Arizona State vs. Kansas State

**AdvoCare V100 Bowl** – North Carolina vs. Ohio\*

*\*Previously had Pittsburgh representing the ACC and Bowling Green filling the SEC vacancy*

**Sun Bowl** – Virginia Tech vs. UCLA

*\*Previously had Duke vs. Washington*

**Liberty Bowl** – Marshall vs. Vanderbilt

**Chick-Fil-A Bowl** – Duke vs. Georgia

*\*Previously had Virginia Tech representing the ACC*

**Heart of Dallas Bowl** – North Texas vs. Bowling Green\*

*\*Bowling Green takes the Big Ten vacancy that's now here; previously had Iowa representing the Big Ten*

**Cotton Bowl** – Baylor vs. Texas A&M

*\*Previously had Texas representing the Big 12*

**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:**

- Iowa's game against Michigan for reasons already mentioned.*
- Baylor at Oklahoma State: Again, for reasons already mentioned regarding the Big 12 bowl order and if Baylor maybe gets considered for a BCS at-large if it finishes 11-1 with this being its one loss.*
- Pittsburgh at Syracuse: The winner of this game will have six wins and be bowl-eligible. If the Orange win, I'll be putting them back in a bowl with an ACC tie-in and likely removing Pitt, who would then need to beat Miami on Black Friday in order to avoid seven losses.*
- Vanderbilt at Tennessee: The Volunteers need to win out in order to become bowl-eligible. If Tennessee wins Saturday, it will be featured in next week's projections and that current vacancy in the BBVA Compass Bowl will be no more, meaning one less spot for whichever teams are among the leftovers in next week's pool.*
- Utah at Washington State: If Washington State wins, the Cougars become bowl-eligible and the Utes would have seven losses, making them ineligible. If Utah wins though, both teams would have to win next week. Something to keep in mind*

*in the event the Utes reach six wins: Arizona beat Utah head-to-head last month.*

*– Western Kentucky at Texas State: Don't laugh. Both teams have six wins and are already bowl-eligible. I also still have the Hilltoppers among the 70 teams I project to be bowling this winter. If Western Kentucky wins, it'll remain in the discussion to fill one of the available vacancies. If Texas State wins though, then it replaces Western Kentucky in any future discussions where the possibility of a third Sun Belt team getting a bowl exists.*

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## **11/18/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 107 (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*

The surprise isn't that Michigan State is ranked No. 1 in the country now after the Spartans beat Kentucky last week at the Champions Classic in Chicago. Once that happened, it was practically a formality Michigan State would be atop both the AP and Coaches Polls released Monday (although Columbia gave the Spartans quite a scare the other night inside the Breslin Center).

Here's what the surprise is: Monday's releases of both rankings feature Michigan State as the nation's No. 1 college basketball team for the first time since the 2000-2001 season. Yes, it had been that long since Tom Izzo's program stood atop the college basketball world.

It feels shocking because (outside of 2010-11, anyway) Michigan State has always been consistently among the Big Ten's elite under Izzo's watch. Since winning the national championship back in 2000, the Spartans have been to four Final Fours (2001, 2005, 2009, 2010) and were even a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament two seasons ago after winning both the Big Ten regular season and tournament crowns. When one thinks of Big Ten basketball in this millennium, Michigan State's probably the first team that comes to mind.

But here's where what's taking place right now in East Lansing deserves the merit its currently receiving: Only one of those aforementioned Final Four trips since that 2000 national title featured the Spartans as a No. 1 seed (2001, the last time it was ranked No. 1). Michigan State has always been viewed as one of those teams that has to be accounted for come March, but it hasn't always been viewed among the country's elite teams (2011-12 perhaps being the exception despite losing to Louisville in the Sweet 16).

Coming into this season, it was no secret the Spartans were and still are the Big Ten's best team. They only lost one starter from last year's squad and the name of that player wasn't Gary Harris or Adreian Payne. Not only is that the league's best 1-2 punch this season, but those two guys just might be the Big Ten's best players this season, period.

Michigan State might not have the stud freshmen like those other three teams that were with it in Chicago last week have (by the way, no one would objectively speaking be opposed to that foursome making up this year's Final Four, right?). But what the Spartans do possess is the experience from having



gone through one of the Big Ten's best seasons ever just a year ago. The rest of the league's contenders might not be as strong this year, but that's absolutely not the case here with Michigan State.

Throw in that aforementioned success in March throughout Izzo's tenure in East Lansing, and this is why the Spartans belong in the same conversation (and rightfully so) with teams like Kentucky, Kansas and Duke this season.

Maybe Michigan State isn't really the nation's best team at this time, even if its ranking suggest it is. But make no mistake, this is a squad that will remain in the conversation all season long. The Spartans look the part of a team capable of winning the Big Ten, being a No. 1 seed in the NCAA tourney and keeping that factoid about every single one of Izzo's four-year players experiencing a Final Four during his time coaching Michigan State.

In a season where college basketball is viewed nationally as the strongest it has ever been, whoever wins the national title will be earning every bit of it. If this year's version does reach the Final Four and does so as the No. 1 seed it will very likely be come March, it's going to be in the discussion of Izzo's best teams all-time. If the Spartans cut down the nets in Arlington, Texas, on April 7, it might even end up being viewed better than that 1999-2000 squad.

That might end up being the biggest surprise of all.

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## **Iowa vs. Michigan Game Notes,**

# 2-deep

## OFFENSE:

SE 4 Smith, 8 Shumpert

LT 68 Scherff, 76 MacMillan

LG 59 Boffeli, 57 Gaul

C 63 Blythe, 58 Simmons

RG 65 Walsh, 78 Donnal

RT 70 Van Sloten, 73 Ward

TE 86 Fiedorowicz, 82 Hamilton/87 Duzey

WR 11 Martin-Manley, 17 Hillyer

QB 15 Rudock, 16 Beathard

RB 45 Weisman/5 Bullock, 33 Canzeri

FB 38 Cox, 42 Plewa

## DEFENSE:

LE 95 Ott, 34 Meier

LT 71 Davis, 67 Johnson

RT 90 Trinca-Pasat, 97 Cooper

RE 98 Hardy, 34 Meier

OLB 20 Kirksey, 39 Perry

MLB 44 Morris, 52 Alston

WLB 31 Hitchens, 6 Spearman

LCB 19 Lowery, 27 Lomax

SS 37 Lowdermilk, 21 Law

FS 5 Miller, 12 Gair

RCB 14 King, 7 Draper

**SPECIAL TEAMS:**

P 98 Kornbrath

PK 96 Meyer, 1 Koehn

LS 61 Kreiter

HOLDER 98 Kornbrath

PR 11 Martin-Manley

KR 23 Cotton, 33 Canzeri

[Iowa vs. Michigan Game Notes](#)

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## **2013 Big Ten football TV schedule: Week Thirteen**

Every week, we will post the TV schedule for all games featuring Big Ten teams. Here is where and when you can watch them this week:

Nov. 23:

**Michigan at Iowa, 11 a.m., BTN**

No. 13 Michigan State at Northwestern, 11 a.m., ESPN

Illinois at Purdue, 11 a.m., BTN

No. 16 Wisconsin at Minnesota, 2:30 p.m., ESPN

Indiana at No. 4 Ohio State, 2:30 p.m., ABC/ESPN2

Nebraska at Penn State, 2:30 p.m., BTN

**\*All times listed are Central Standard Time.**