

Iowa-NU video: Mike Meyer

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Iowa senior kicker Mike Meyer connected on 1-of-2 field goal attempts and made both of his extra-point attempts in the Hawkeyes' 17-10 overtime victory over Northwestern on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium. The 38-yard field goal Meyer made in the second quarter moved him into second on Iowa's all-time made field goals list behind former kicker Nate Kaeding.

DeVries joins ANF Wall of Honor



Jared DeVries became the second former Iowa football player to have his name etched onto Kinnick Stadium's ANF Wall of Honor on Friday, Oct. 25, 2013. DeVries was a defensive

lineman for the Hawkeyes during the final seasons of the Hayden Fry era and went on to play 12 seasons in the NFL, all with the Detroit Lions.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – One year after watching his “big brother” and current business partner Casey Wiegmann see his name become the first etched on Kinnick Stadium’s ANF Wall of Honor, Jared DeVries became the second former Hawkeye to be honored Friday.

Like Wiegmann, DeVries played for the late Ed Thomas at Aplington-Parkersburg High School before committing to Hayden Fry and Iowa. Once he became a Hawkeye, he was a force along Iowa’s defensive line, starting all four seasons he played. DeVries was named MVP of both bowl games he won as a Hawkeye – the 1995 Sun Bowl against Washington and the 1996 Alamo Bowl against Texas Tech. He also was first-team all-Big Ten on three occasions and was a consensus all-American during his senior season in 1998.

During that 1995 season at Iowa, DeVries and Wiegmann were teammates. The bond between the two former Hawkeyes and Aplington-Parkersburg Falcons is something DeVries said he appreciates to this day, as the two share a business endeavor in Iowa’s farming industry.

“It’s a big honor,” DeVries said. “Obviously, Casey and what he stands for, you couldn’t pick a better first recipient. He was my big brother here at Iowa and what better thing to follow him up in?”

“I followed him to Iowa and I follow him in this fantastic

award. That does mean a lot. He and I are great friends and that relationship that we built at Iowa continues to grow.”

DeVries was drafted in the third round of the 1999 NFL Draft by the Detroit Lions, whom he spent his entire career with. During this time-frame spanning more than a decade, there were many obstacles DeVries had to face. On the field, there was season after season of losing and DeVries ended up playing for six different head coaches in Detroit – Bobby Ross, Marty Mornhinweg, Steve Mariucci, Dick Jauron (on an interim basis), Rod Marinelli and Jim Schwartz – all while being one of the only constants inside the Lions organization.

He also dealt with numerous injuries, saying he had 13 surgeries over his career. But DeVries never let the losses or injuries deter him, which he attributes to the farming background he grew up with in the state of Iowa.

“The work ethic my parents instilled and that Coach Thomas reinforced, I just kept my nose to the grindstone,” DeVries said. “And what is that? That’s the Iowa farmer, right? That’s what Iowa people stand for. You just keep working, keep working, keep working.”

“I just took it off the farm and put it in a football setting. You get off the surgery table and just go back to work. Whatever the outcome was, I was going to be O.K. with it because I know I worked the hardest and best that I could.”

Below is video of DeVries from Friday’s ceremony:

10/25/2013: I-Club breakfast video

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – As he does every Friday morning before a home football game, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz spoke at the Johnson County I-Club Breakfast inside the Sheraton Hotel. This week, he discussed the Hawkeyes' upcoming game against Northwestern.

Ferentz was introduced by former Iowa defensive tackle Matt Kroul, who was a four-year starter for the Hawkeyes from 2005-2008 and later went on to play in the NFL for three seasons with the New York Jets.

Below are videos of both Kroul's and Ferentz's speeches:

Iowa vs. Northwestern (What to expect)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

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

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

Iowa Hawkeyes (4-3, 1-2) vs. Northwestern Wildcats (4-3, 0-3)

Kinnick Stadium; Iowa City, Iowa

Oct. 26, 2013

11 a.m. Central

TV: BTN (Matt Devlin, Glen Mason, Jon Jansen)

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

[Weather: 47 degrees; clear skies; winds from W/NW around 15-16 MPH with gusts between 21-23 MPH](#)

Brendan's Three Keys to the Game:

1. Make Northwestern adjust to offensive strengths

Looking back at what worked for Iowa against Ohio State last weekend, there's no reason to think the Hawkeyes can't have similar success against Northwestern on Saturday with two things specifically – establishing a ground game and utilizing the tight ends. This is a good week for Iowa to include its 13 personnel grouping because for one, it can double-team Wildcat DE Tyler Scott with two tight ends whenever it attempts to run to his side of the field, and two, it would force Northwestern to do more than simply jam Iowa receivers off their routes whenever the Hawkeyes do look to throw the ball. The main thing here is going to be not abandoning this completely should Northwestern's defense has success in the early going of getting off the field.

2. Force 3rd-and-long situations defensively

Regardless of whether it's Kain Colter or Trevor Siemian taking snaps at quarterback for Northwestern, this is huge. In

recent match-ups against Iowa, the Wildcats have had success moving the chains because they pick up positive yardage on first and second downs and find themselves in 3rd-and-short opportunities. Whenever the Hawkeye defense managed any sort of success stopping Northwestern, it would be when the Wildcats faced 3rd-and-long (let's say at least 6 yards or more to go). Along these same lines, if Iowa does use any nickel on 3rd-and-long (don't expect this with Nate Meier already playing more in the DE rotation with Dominic Alvis out), it'll more likely occur when Siemian's taking snaps. As long as Colter's out there, expect more of the base 4-3 look since Colter is capable of making plays with his feet as well as his arm.

3. Solid second half

Iowa has led at halftime in every game this season, yet enters this contest with a 4-3 record. With this game looking much more winnable for the Hawkeyes than it was just 2-3 weeks ago, this is the week Iowa needs to play a strong second half, especially if Saturday marks the eighth straight game with a halftime lead. In the second halves of the Hawkeyes' three losses, Iowa has a combined 10 points and a time of possession average of under 10 minutes. Not only that, but six of Jake Rudock's seven interceptions this season have come in the second half and four of those six second-half turnovers have come in those three defeats. Maybe this is where sticking to your strengths comes into play, but regardless, the Hawkeye offense needs to be clicking throughout the second half if they're going to beat Northwestern on Saturday and move one step closer to becoming bowl-eligible.

10/24/2013: Talkin' Hawks podcast (Iowa vs. Northwestern)

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 Northwestern, which takes place Oct. 26 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 Kevin Trahan, who covers Northwestern for [Inside Northwestern](#). This week's edition is approximately 72 minutes long, so enjoy:

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Talkin-Hawks-podcast-10242013-Iowa-vs.-Northwestern.mp3>

Twitter handles:

HawkeyeDrive.com – [@HawkeyeDrive](#)

Brendan Stiles – [@thebstiles](#)

Chris Rowell – [@Crowell34](#)

Kevin Trahan – [@k_trahan](#)

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

10/22/2013: Iowa football notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game against Northwestern during his weekly press conference held Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – At this time a year ago, the Iowa Hawkeyes entered an upcoming contest against Northwestern possessing a 4-3 overall record after losing a tough game to Penn State the week before.

What ensued was ugly. The Wildcats went up-and-down the field

on the Hawkeyes and aside from a pair of fourth quarter touchdowns, Iowa was manhandled. After that 28-17 defeat in Evanston, Ill., the Hawkeyes' 2012 season continued to nosedive.

"It was a Kodak moment in that there were a lot of things that took place in the game that we didn't execute well enough," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said during his weekly press conference Tuesday. "As a coach, you focus on the things that keep you from having a chance to have success. There were a lot of visuals in that game that really jumped out."

This week, the Hawkeyes find themselves in a similar spot. Once again, they face Northwestern with a 4-3 record. Once again, there's an opportunity to rebound after a difficult defeat – this time, a 34-24 loss to No. 4 Ohio State last weekend in Columbus, Ohio.

Two major differences between last year's meeting and Saturday's showdown between the Hawkeyes and Wildcats exist, however. One is location, as Iowa opens up a two-game home-stand Saturday with this game against Northwestern. The other is the Wildcats looking more vulnerable this time around, as they seek their first Big Ten win after losing their last three games – the most recent being a 20-17 defeat at home to Minnesota.

There's also the matter of Northwestern not being entirely at full strength. Running back Venric Mark will miss his second consecutive game following a leg injury suffered in a game at Wisconsin. Quarterback Kain Colter is "day-to-day" according to head coach Pat Fitzgerald, but was listed as the Wildcats' first-string quarterback on their depth chart this week and is expected to return Saturday after he injured his ankle in that same Wisconsin game.

Last season against the Hawkeyes, Colter and Mark combined for 332 yards rushing and the former scored three times on the

ground. Given the day-to-day status, Iowa defensive players are anticipating Colter being out there this weekend.

"We just got to prepare because he is one of their best players," senior linebacker Christian Kirksey said about Colter. "You know, we're in Big Ten play, so he's probably getting ready to play for them, so we just got to expect that."

Meanwhile, Iowa will be without the services of senior defensive end Dominic Alvis on Saturday. Alvis originally got injured in the Hawkeyes' game against Michigan State on Oct. 5. He started against Ohio State, but left during the Buckeyes' opening possession and didn't return the rest of the game. Alvis wasn't listed on Iowa's 2-deep this week, as junior Mike Hardy was listed in his place instead.

Ferentz said he hopes a four-man rotation at defensive end can continue without Alvis this week, but that fourth spot in the rotation is currently up for grabs. Hardy, along with sophomores Drew Ott and Nate Meier constitute the three known spots right now.

Another challenge for the Hawkeyes this week will be finding ways to finish games. Iowa's current 4-3 mark comes despite leading at halftime in all seven contests played thus far. In the three losses to Northern Illinois, Michigan State and Ohio State, things such as turnovers, limited time of possession and not scoring points have plagued Iowa in the second halves of those games.

Six of sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock's seven interceptions this season have come in the second half, including four in those three defeats. The Hawkeyes also have a combined total of just 10 second half points during those 90 minutes of football and opponents have more than doubled Iowa in time of possession.

"The way I look at it is we just have to finish," Rudock said.

“We know teams are going to make adjustments. They have to. That’s part of the game of football unless they give you a goose egg in the first half.

“It really is just execution. When you’re not finishing drives, when you’re not getting at least close enough to have a chance at a field goal, it makes it tougher.”

The topic of targeting

Last Saturday’s game in Columbus marked the first time this season Iowa was involved in a targeting call. It came during the first quarter on the Hawkeyes’ second possession of the game. Senior tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz made an 11-yard reception and was hit helmet-to-helmet by Ohio State cornerback Bradley Roby as he turned his head. Roby was called for “targeting” and ejected from the game following a booth review. Targeting is defined in the NCAA rulebook as taking aim at an opponent with intent that goes beyond any legal tackle, block or play of the football.

Afterwards, Ferentz said he felt [the correct call was made](#) by the officials and Fiedorowicz said [Roby hit him with his helmet](#).

When Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer was asked about the targeting rule last summer at Big Ten Media Days, he said he was good with it since player safety was the primary purpose for why it would become more strictly enforced by officials in 2013. While talking to reporters Monday in Columbus, Meyer reiterated his support for player safety, but suggested the rule be re-examined during the off-season.

As it pertained to Roby’s hit on Fiedorowicz, Meyer said, [“That rule was not put in for that play.”](#) Roby was the second Big Ten player in as many weeks to be ejected from a game for targeting after no Big Ten players were ejected for targeting in the first six weeks of the 2013 season.

During his press conference Tuesday, Ferentz was asked about Meyer's remarks and he expressed how his opinion on the topic meant very little.

"The rules are the rules. Every rule is open to interpretation," Ferentz said. "It's all about player safety. That's why they pushed it.

"Every one of us showed that tape to our players in August. It's a bang-bang thing. It's a hard rule to officiate. That's why I think the process, everything I know about it, is the way it should be. You just go from there."

The "13" package

In preparing for Ohio State last week, Iowa implemented a new wrinkle to its offense by making use of the "13" package, which is the Hawkeyes' personnel name for when they line up using three tight ends. On Saturday, the look was used frequently with Fiedorowicz, junior Ray Hamilton and sophomore Jake Duzey and it paid off early on for Iowa. The opening drive consisted of 15 plays, five of which were completions by sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock. All five of those completions went to tight ends, including the 2-yard score by Fiedorowicz that gave Iowa a 7-0 lead.

Fiedorowicz and Duzey combined for over half of Rudock's 19 completions and in Duzey's case, he actually led the Hawkeyes in both receptions (6) and receiving yards (138), the bulk of which came on his 85-yard score in the third quarter that tied the game at 24-24.

"It fit what we were doing," Ferentz said about the 13 package being in the team's game plan last week. "It doesn't alter us dramatically, but it gave us maybe just one more package to go to a little bit without radically changing what we're doing."

In Duzey's case, the package allowed him to showcase his quickness in space, as evident by the touchdown he scored.

"I'm not going to say I'm faster than everybody, but I feel pretty good about it," Duzey said about his confidence level in open space.

Whether it remains a permanent fixture of Iowa's offense going forward remains to be seen. Given Northwestern's issues defensively, it shouldn't surprise if the Hawkeyes continue utilizing the 13 set this weekend.

"They continue to work hard and improve," Ferentz said. "We'll utilize that group if it fits the team we're playing."

King shining

Earlier in the week, freshman cornerback Desmond King was named the Big Ten's Freshman of the Week, marking the first time an Iowa player had received the honor since it was first established in 2010. Against the Buckeyes, King tied for a team-high 12 tackles (10 of which were solo) with senior linebacker James Morris.

King was the first true freshman to have his redshirt burned this season when he filled in for an injured Jordan Lomax during the Hawkeyes' season-opening loss to Northern Illinois back on Aug. 31. Since then, he has started every game at corner opposite senior B.J. Lowery.

"He has done a good job of coming in right away, getting thrown into the fire and just adapting," senior free safety Tanner Miller said. "It's just a tribute to him coming in with the right mind-set and work ethic."

Along the way, King has also earned the respect of his defensive teammates. Not just during games like this past weekend against Ohio State, but also during practice and when the entire defense gets together for group meetings and watching film.

"He's not acting like a freshman," Kirksey said. "Sometimes

when you're a freshman, you might just stay in the back and listen. You know, get a feel of things. But he's in there asking questions. He's in there trying to better himself."

Much like Ferentz and his coaching staff, Morris said how he took notice of King during fall camp last August, specifically during 7-on-7 drills.

"Some guys just sort of have a natural knack for coverage abilities, man-to-man coverage situations," Morris said. "Desmond was definitely one of those guys and that was evident when you first watched him practice.

"I've just been really, really encouraged by his work ethic and buying into the team identities. He seems like a pretty unselfish kid and it has been fun to play with him."

10/22/2013: Iowa player audio with photos (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

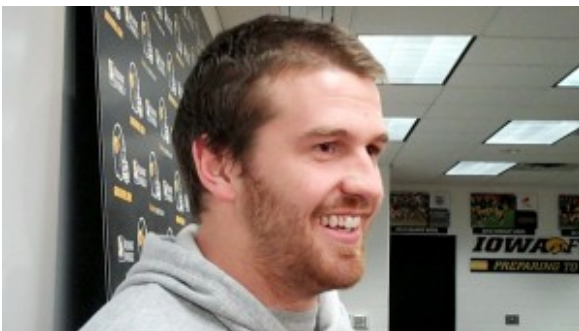
IOWA CITY, Iowa – On Tuesday, seven members of the Iowa football team spoke with the media to discuss the Hawkeyes' upcoming game on Oct. 26 against Northwestern at Kinnick Stadium.

Below is audio from each of the following players – senior free safety Tanner Miller, sophomore tight end Jake Duzey, senior linebacker James Morris, junior running back Mark Weisman, junior defensive tackle Carl Davis, senior linebacker Christian Kirksey and sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock:



Tanner Miller, Oct. 22, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Tanner-Miller-10222013.mp3>



Jake Duzey, Oct. 22, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Jake-Duzey-10222013.mp3>



James Morris, Oct. 22, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/James-Morris-10222013.mp3>



Mark Weisman, Oct. 22, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Mark-Weisman-10222013.mp3>



Carl Davis, Oct. 22, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Carl-Davis-10222013.mp3>



Christian Kirksey, Oct. 22, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Christian-Kirksey-10222013.mp3>



Jake Rudock, Oct. 22, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Jake-Rudock-10222013.mp3>

10/22/2013: 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 – 10 22 13](#)

10/22/2013: 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 tough game last week for us. I thought our guys played hard. Both teams really competed hard. It was disappointing to lose. We got back here and went back to work on Sunday. We're anxious to get back on the field and get ready for a very good Northwestern team. We'll start that today."

On how everyone in the program attempts to make the most out of having two bye weeks this season:

"Um, you know, the first bye week actually came at a good time. We had some injury problems, so that gave us a chance to get some guys better able to practice and compete and that type of thing. It worked out fine. But you're right. It is the first time and you know, there's a lot of firsts going on, I think with expansion, etc. If you hang around long enough, you go through a few of those."

"But I think like any bye week, you make the most of it and probably have a plan that's flexible and I think at least on our part, certainly, we've got one coming up here in three weeks and we'll probably treat that a little differently than we did the last one. I'm happy with what we did the last time, but we'll probably alter the other one because we're going to be later in the season and etc., maybe give the guys a little"

bit more time away.

"You know, I think it's an individual thing. You just try and figure out where you're at as a team and try and do what's best for the guys, just like you would if it were a game week."

On what he does personally on a bye week Saturday when there's no game to coach:

"Um, you know, it depends on the Saturday, I guess. The last time we had one, it gave me a good chance to get some stuff cleaned up in the morning and I went to my granddaughter's birthday party. Her first birthday party was that afternoon, so it was a pretty good day."

On the amount of credit offensive coordinator Greg Davis deserves for the turn-around Iowa has had thus far in 2013:

"I hadn't heard. I hadn't heard about that criticism. Imagine that. But you know, it's just the nature of being a coordinator. It's interesting. It's an interesting phenomena, for me at least. Maybe I live a sheltered life. But it seems like in the last decade, offensive coordinators are garnering more attention than they ever have, especially in a negative way. They really become lightning rods. So it's a hard job."

"But the bottom line is, you know, we're better. I think we're a better offensive football team than we were last year. We're a little more experienced, but we're still hardly out of the woods yet. But we're a little bit more experienced and a little bit more balanced."

"I think the thing that impressed me about Greg right off the bat, everybody I talked to said the same thing about him. Then when I met him and spent some time with him, it became apparent that he's a very tremendous, tremendous person and an outstanding teacher. Obviously, he knows the game. But he's a great teacher, has a great ability to get his ideas across to"

the staff and the players. I thought he was an excellent coach a year ago and I think some of that is starting to show up a little bit right now.

“The one thing about football, you know it takes time. When you’re going through a new system, installing a new system, that takes time as well. So we’ve certainly been there offensively. Defensively, not to the same extent.”

On if scoring on the first three drives against Ohio State last weekend is a testimony to Davis as an offensive coordinator:

“It is. I think the guys, the offensive staff, had a good plan and most importantly, the players executed it. But part of that is you may have a great plan, but if your guys can’t execute – which we ask them to do – then it doesn’t really matter. The guys did a great job on the practice field and certainly in the first half, really did a good job there as well. So you know, it’s good. We still have a lot of room for improvement and hopefully, we’ll continue that path this week. We’ll need to.”

On how Iowa’s series with Northwestern has evolved and whether it has reached “rivalry” status:

“I think, you know, I don’t know what that word ‘rivalry’ means. I mean, all Big Ten games are really important. I think if you play conference football, which until I came here in ’81 – I guess my one year at Pitt, we weren’t really in a conference back then, so it was a little different. But anytime you’re in conference, I think you understand the meaning of every conference game.

“I’ve been involved with 20-plus of these, I guess, so I don’t think we have enough time to go through each and every game. But you know, conference football is conference football. Every game is really important and this is certainly an important game, I think, for both teams playing this week.”

On if he knew tight end Jake Duzey could outrun defenses like he did last weekend against Ohio State:

“Uh, I mean, not necessarily. You know, Jake runs well and we knew that. But you know, he did a great job finishing that play and it came at a real opportune time where we just had a penalty called the play before that put us in a tough spot. Field position wasn’t great and you know, it was good to get the completion, certainly. But any time you can finish a play, we hadn’t had an enormous amount of really big plays like that, so it was great to see.”

On the importance of being able to score quickly, especially later in the season when teams are more beat up:

“It’s always nice. I mean, if you have that luxury, it’s a good thing. It’s a challenge defensively because you always want to try and avoid giving those up and certainly, offensively, if you can create a few, that’s a good thing. That’s something we’ll continue to try and work on as a team.”

On quarterback Jake Rudock’s performance against Ohio State and what it means for his development:

“Well, I think it’s another step for him. You know, every game is a step, obviously. But how you handle steps is critical. You know, he didn’t play a perfect game, but you know, going into another tough environment – that was our third road game – certainly, the largest crowd we’ve played against with him as the quarterback. And then we ask our quarterbacks to do a lot when they’re in there in terms of making sure we’re in the right plays, getting us in the right plays, those types of things.

“He continues just to show a lot of poise out there, a lot of control and plays well. But just as important is his demeanor and when he does make a mistake – I’ve been saying this for however many weeks now – when he makes a mistake, he seems to push through that and move on to the next play. So those are

really good signs and he made some good throws. We're just pleased with the way he has come along and with the way he is leading our team."

On what he sees differently with Ohio State running back Carlos Hyde from previous years:

"Yeah, we hadn't played them since 2010, so it's really hard to comment. I can just tell you going into the game, we had an awful lot of respect for him. If you watch him on film, it's not hard to pick up that he's a pretty good player and you know, you walk away from the game and I would just say he's a very, very tough runner. He has great ability, he's strong and he's a tough-minded runner."

On the 12-tackle performance from cornerback Desmond King, which earned him Big Ten Freshman of the Week honors:

"Yeah, it has been a good story. Not one that we necessarily saw coming. Jordan Lomax was our corner throughout the spring and camp and he had some leg issues, some muscle issues, and had to come out early. So Desmond was the next man in."

"He did a really good job from the day he walked in and got started here in August. You know, he hasn't played perfect. Nobody does. But he's really, kind of like Jake Rudock is not seemingly overwhelmed by everything, Desmond has kind of been the same way, which is kind of unusual for a true freshman like that. I compare him a little bit to Antwan Allen. Back in 2002, he got thrown into the mix unexpectedly back in August. He was a redshirt freshman and did a nice job handling it."

"It's a tough position to play, especially for a younger player, but Desmond has really responded well. We're really proud of him and we're glad he's on our team. He's really a great young man to have on the team."

10/21/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 103 (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

Before the 2013 college football season began, there was plenty of discussion taking place about "targeting" being enforced more frequently. This was done primarily as a way to promote player safety and limit the number of head injuries.

Players who get called for "targeting" are also subject to ejection pending review. After six weeks without a single player ejection taking place, the Big Ten has now seen players in consecutive weeks get tossed from games as a result of the rule. On Oct. 12, it was Nebraska cornerback Stanley Jean-Baptiste getting ejected from the Cornhuskers' game against Purdue.

Last weekend, it was Ohio State cornerback Bradley Roby leaving the Buckeyes' game against Iowa after he was called for targeting and his ejection drew the ire of Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer during his weekly press conference on Monday in Columbus.

By the pure definition of the rule, both players were guilty of targeting and one could argue the ejections in both cases

were warranted. But maybe the rule is a bit harsher than it needs to be.

This isn't to say there shouldn't be personal foul penalties called for hits like the two mentioned. But should those hits warrant ejections the first go-around, especially when the player "targeted" doesn't leave the game for good because of said hit? It's debatable and that's why there's such heavy discussion re-surfacing.

In the case of Roby's hit, Iowa tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz – who was on the receiving end of it – was looked at on the field by trainers and eventually came back in from the sideline at the end of that Iowa possession. Roby definitely deserved a 15-yard personal foul penalty for the hit because there was helmet-to-helmet contact that took place. But it's hard to sit there and say, "Yes, Roby had intent of aiming at Fiedorowicz's head on that particular hit." It wasn't as though Roby morphed into Brandon Meriweather on the field.

The issue's not going away, either. There are still seven weeks left in the college football season before bowl games are played in late December and early January. That means there are seven more weeks worth of games (among those Big Ten games) where this issue can and probably will come up again before season's end.

Because of the impact this rule has had across the entire college football landscape this autumn, it's going to get reviewed again this offseason. The intent has never been questioned by those involved with the game in any sort of capacity. It's the whole judgment of whether a player should be ejected, which gets reviewed by the booth every time an official calls targeting on the field.

The amount of gray area with this rule is what makes it controversial. When it comes to player ejections, there can't be gray area. They need to be black and white and if there's

doubt on whether a player should be ejected (especially on the first such offense), the player probably shouldn't be ejected.

Hopefully, there aren't any severe season-ending head injuries that occur between now and season's end because of hits that fall under the definition of "targeting." But the targeting topic will remain relevant as long as college football stands pat on how it's currently constructed.