

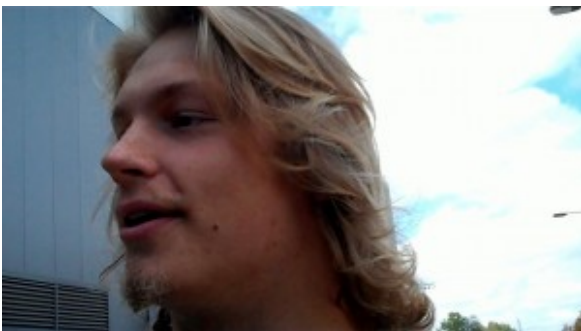
10/15/2013: Iowa player audio with photos (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

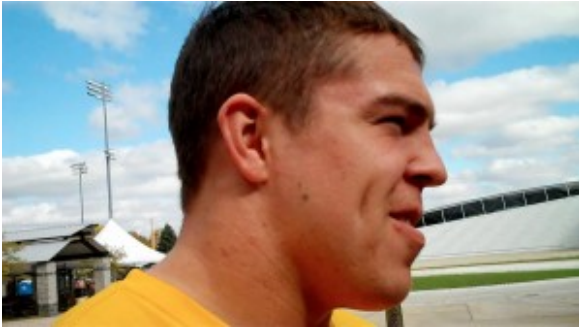
IOWA CITY, Iowa – On Tuesday, eight members of the Iowa football team spoke with the media to discuss the Hawkeyes' upcoming game on Oct. 19 against No. 4 Ohio State at Ohio Stadium in Columbus, Ohio.

Below is audio from each of the following players – junior offensive lineman Andrew Donnal, sophomore fullback Adam Cox, junior running back Mark Weisman, junior strong safety John Lowdermilk, senior offensive tackle Brett Van Sloten, sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock, senior linebacker Anthony Hitchens and sophomore wide receiver Tevaun Smith:



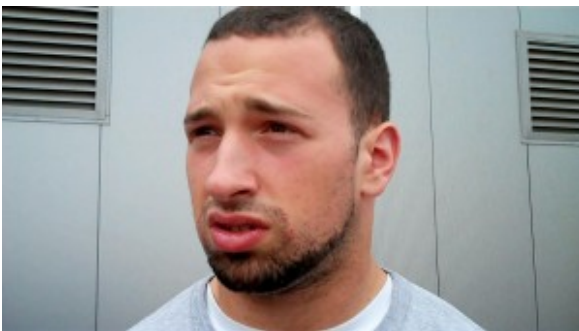
Andrew Donnal, Oct. 15, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Andrew-Donnal-10152013.mp3>



Adam Cox, Oct. 15, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Adam-Cox-10152013.mp3>



Mark Weisman, Oct. 15, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Mark-Weisman-10152013.mp3>



John Lowdermilk, Oct. 15, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/John-Lowdermilk-10152013.mp3>



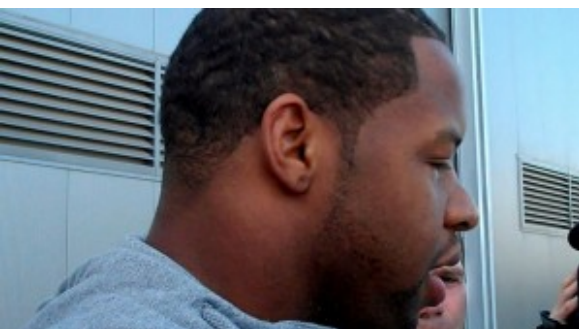
Brett Van Sloten, Oct. 15, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Brett-Van-Sloten-10152013.mp3>



Jake Rudock, Oct. 15, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Jake-Rudock-10152013.mp3>



Anthony Hitchens, Oct. 15, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Anthony-Hitchens-10152013.mp3>



Tevaun Smith, Oct. 15, 2013

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Tevaun-Smith-10152013.mp3>

10/15/2013: 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 15 13](#)

10/15/2013: 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 had, I think, a productive bye week. It gave us a chance to work on some things and get players healthy, so I think all in all, things went pretty well and we're eager to get back on the field today."

On whether Mark Weisman will be ready to go and the role he has on the Hawkeyes' running game if he can play:

"Yeah, that was one of our problems last year. We came into the season really with two backs who had no experience carrying the ball in the Big Ten and I think both Mark and Damon Bullock did a good job last year when they were available. But basically, I don't know if we ever had them both together for a game, so that's something we've enjoyed this year."

"We've had them both available, for the most part. Mark had to come out of the game last time, but he's doing fine. We're better with the more players we have that are experienced, that are healthy. It's better for us."

On whether he sees vulnerabilities with Ohio State's pass defense:

"I mean, we look across and see a team that's very, very talented and that includes their defense. They've got

phenomenally gifted athletes in the back end and I think they're playing well. Certainly, that's the case with their guys up front, too. They have very talented guys who can get after the passer and make it tough.

"It's hard to find a weak spot on their football team. They've won however many they've won in a row, it's approaching 20. You don't do that by accident. It takes good players, good coaching and guys that are ready to go every Saturday."

On what he remembers most about Iowa's last trip to Columbus in 2009:

"It was disappointing. It was a great football game. I mean, both teams competed at an extremely high level. It was a great environment. I think that's one of the great things about our conference. You know, you travel around the conference and there are a lot of great environments to play in. That's certainly the case in Columbus.

"Any time you go there, you know you're going to be playing a tough, well-coached football team and that was the case in '09 and will certainly be the case this time."

On how close he thinks his program is to getting back to where it was on that night in 2009:

"Well, that was 2009. This is 2013 or whatever it is. You know, every season's different. Every team's different. Right now, we're a 4-2 team trying to figure out a way to win No. 5. That won't be easy this week, but that's where our focus is."

On how he feels his defense matches up against Braxton Miller and the rest of Ohio State's offense:

"Uh, well, we're going to find that out Saturday. They're extremely talented and it's interesting. If you look at them statistically, their back-up quarterback and running back have better statistics than the guys that have started the last

couple of weeks. So I think that gives you a little indication about their depth as well and then you go back to last year and that one example when Miller came out, they just kept moving.

“So they’ve got a lot of good players and if you look at their offense, pick a position and try to find a weakness. Good luck on that one. And then they’ve got some young guys that they’re trying to integrate as well, but I think that’ll make them much more dangerous.”

On if it’s more difficult to game plan for Ohio State because of the depth it has offensively:

“Well again, yeah. They’re approaching 20 straight wins. You don’t do that by accident. It takes a lot of things. It takes more than just having good players, so they’ve been very, very consistent. They’ve been pretty successful that way and if you look at the rate they’re scoring points and moving the football, that’s not by accident, either.

“So it’s everybody doing their jobs and you know, it doesn’t matter what 11 guys are out there on the field. They’re playing really well and playing at a high level.”

On whether having a heavy class load helps Jake Rudock handle complex things on the field like he’s able to off the field:

“Yeah, it doesn’t hurt. You bring that up and I’m just sitting here thinking about Andrew Luck. Not by any stretch of the imagination am I trying to compare the two as quarterbacks, but I think he was an architectural engineering major. It was something ridiculous at Stanford and if you ever hear him talk, he’s really an articulate young guy and seems like a pretty deep thinker. So yeah, it never hurts.

“But I’ve got to tell you – I’ve coached engineers that couldn’t make any blocking assignment. In their minds, they could build bridges, but they couldn’t correlate that to

football, so it's not always a given. But I think in Jake's case, certainly he's a sharp, young guy. He's very serious about his academic work, which is commendable. But he also does a really nice job of grasping things in the football realm as well.

"But again, I'm just going off past experiences, both here and coaching in the NFL. I don't think there's a strong correlation between that sometimes. Test scores and practical football knowledge, they don't always mesh."

On how Rudock has progressed as a quarterback:

"Well, you'd like to think you know going into things, but until players really get on the field, you're not quite sure. That's especially true at quarterback because in most systems, I think it's a position that really requires a little bit more experience. Typically, that's a better thing.

"You know, the other part is everybody is an expert about quarterbacks, so they get a lot of critiquing from everybody. So all that being said, I think he has really done a good job and I think probably the thing I'm impressed with as anything is whenever something doesn't go the way we plan or hope, he just seems to play on.

"I think he has shown a lot of resiliency and we've been on the road a couple of times this year, so that's a good thing. But we haven't been in an environment like the one we're going to be in on Saturday and against an opponent like this, so that's going to be another degree of difficulty."

On recruiting Damond Powell and what he has brought to the team so far this season:

"Well you know, we're very inexperienced at the receiver position. That was probably – outside of quarterback – our most inexperienced position coming in this year. We obviously knew that awhile back, so last year, we looked around at

junior college players. We typically don't recruit an awful lot of junior college players historically. But we thought if we could locate the right guy, we'd have an interest.

"Certainly, Damond, we thought was a good prospect as a football player. Then we got a chance to meet him and know him a little bit and I was really impressed with him. Coincidentally, he's from Big Ten country. He grew up in Toledo. So a great mom and dad and a great family. His sister is an Ohio State grad, I believe. So a little aside for you. But he's a great young guy and we're just trying to bring him up to speed as fast as we can."

10/14/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 102 (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

When the AP top 25 was released this past Sunday, it showed just two ranked teams from the Big Ten. Ohio State remained fourth in the poll as it has been for weeks, while Wisconsin climbed back in at the No. 25 spot following a 35-6 drubbing of Northwestern at Camp Randall Stadium.

Solely looking at it from the perspective of "top 25," the

conference has been ridiculed because there's only two teams and one just barely made it. But then look at the "others receiving votes" category and the first three teams listed as just outside the top 25 are Michigan (who fell out of the poll after losing in four overtimes to Penn State), Nebraska and Michigan State. So yes, the Big Ten has just two teams in the top 25. It also has five teams in the top 28.

There's a reason for bringing this up. Actually, there are two reasons. The first reason for bringing this up has to do with one of those teams currently ranked, which is Ohio State. Looking at the Buckeyes' remaining schedule on paper, it looks weak. But keep in mind how they just played two league games out of the gate against Wisconsin and Northwestern, both of whom were ranked at the times they each played the Buckeyes.

This is going to get brought up because when the first batch of BCS rankings are released Sunday, they're going to show Ohio State – assuming it beats Iowa this weekend – listed somewhere in the top 5, but probably not at No. 2 and certainly not at No. 1. The schedule will continue to be brought up as a hinderance to the Buckeyes' cause, even if they played a ranked Michigan team on Nov. 30 in Ann Arbor, followed by a ranked Legends Division squad (perhaps Michigan again or either a Nebraska or Michigan State) in the Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium.

Here's the other role that needs to be considered here, and this is regardless of whether Ohio State were to play in Pasadena on Jan. 1 or Jan. 6 – getting two teams in BCS bowls. The idea might be scoffed at right now, but it's not totally out of the realm of possibility for the Big Ten, either.

Let's say for argument's sake that Wisconsin runs the table (which isn't far-fetched when looking at the Badgers' remaining schedule) and finishes 10-2 overall and 7-1 in Big Ten play, but doesn't get to play in Indianapolis because Ohio State goes 8-0 and wins the Leaders Division. If this scenario

came to fruition, the thought that Wisconsin wouldn't have earned an at-large bid would be foolish. The same could be said for whoever ends up winning the Legends Division if that team lost to the Buckeyes in the title game.

In all likelihood, the SEC, Pac-12 and ACC are each going to have two BCS teams this season. That leaves one remaining spot, which won't go to a second Big 12 team and won't go to Notre Dame this time around. The two threats standing in the way of the Big Ten here would be either an undefeated Fresno State or an undefeated Northern Illinois, even if neither team is actually as good as a Wisconsin might end up being.

If either the Bulldogs or Huskies meet the same criteria Northern Illinois managed to meet last year en route to receiving an Orange Bowl invite, then the Big Ten would have the team left out. But if both teams play their way out of an at-large invite, who else is going to fill it? It'd be there for a second Big Ten team if it handled its business between now and Dec. 8 when the match-ups all get announced.

The Big Ten definitely has its issues, make no mistake. But it's a better conference now football-wise than it was a year ago and while there are only two teams ranked at the moment, there could be anywhere from 4-5 (maybe even 6) ranked in the top 25 when the season ends. It all remains to be seen obviously, but the league isn't as bad as it's perceived to be in the national scope.

Iowa at Ohio State Game

Notes, 2-deep

OFFENSE:

SE 4 Smith, 8 Shumpert

LT 68 Scherff, 76 MacMillan

LG 59 Boffeli, 58 Simmons

C 63 Blythe, 57 Gaul

RG 65 Walsh, 78 Donnal

RT 70 Van Sloten, 73 Ward

TE 86 Fiedorowicz, 82 Hamilton/87 Duzey

WR 11 Martin-Manley, 17 Hillyer/23 Cotton

QB 15 Rudock, 16 Beathard

RB 45 Weisman/5 Bullock, 33 Canzeri

FB 34 Cox, 42 Plewa

DEFENSE:

LE 95 Ott, 98 Hardy

LT 71 Davis, 97 Cooper

RT 90 Trinca-Pasat, 67 Johnson

RE 79 Alvis, 34 Meier

OLB 20 Kirksey, 39 Perry

MLB 44 Morris, 52 Alston

WLB 31 Hitchens, 55 Collins

LCB 19 Lowery, 7 Draper

SS 37 Lowdermilk, 21 Law

FS 5 Miller, 12 Gair

RCB 14 King, 35 Smith

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. Ohio State Game Notes](#)

2013 Big Ten football TV schedule: Week Eight

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:

Oct. 19:

Purdue at Michigan State, 11 a.m., BTN

Minnesota at Northwestern, 11 a.m., ESPN2

Indiana at Michigan, 2:30 p.m., BTN

Iowa at No. 4 Ohio State, 2:30 p.m., [ABC/ESPN2](#)

No. 25 Wisconsin at Illinois, 7 p.m., BTN

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

10/10/2013: Talkin' Hawks podcast (Iowa bye week)

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 look back on Iowa's 26-14 loss to Michigan State last weekend and discuss the Hawkeyes going through their bye week before resuming Big Ten play next week against No. 4 Ohio State. 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.

With this being Iowa's bye week, there's only one segment. We plan to return to the normal format next week. This week's edition is approximately 64 minutes long, so enjoy:

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Talkin-Hawks-podcast-10102013-Iowa-bye-week.mp3>

Twitter handles:

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

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

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

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

10/8/2013: Iowa football notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses the Hawkeyes' bye week during a press conference featuring both his coordinators held Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Much like 2012, the Iowa Hawkeyes sit at the halfway point of their season with a 4-2 overall record. Much like 2012, they face a challenging back-half of their schedule, which this year features three Big Ten teams currently ranked – including Iowa’s upcoming opponent in No. 4 Ohio State – and two others barely sitting outside the AP top 25 entering this weekend’s slate of games.

But unlike last year, one that saw the Hawkeyes lose their final six contests and finish 4-8, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz showed no hesitation Tuesday afternoon expressing belief in the current make-up of his team.

“I think all of us feel this is a better football team,” Ferentz said. “We’re a more capable team right now. But every year is a new adventure, every game is a new adventure.

“But we like the football team. I think we’re on the right path right now.”

With Iowa going through the first of two bye weeks it will have this season, Tuesday presented both Ferentz and both of his coordinators an opportunity to take the dais inside the Hayden Fry Football Complex and reflect on what offensive coordinator Greg Davis said was a chance to “look in the mirror” at where the Hawkeyes are and how they can avoid a repeat of 2012.

In determining an offensive identity, Davis said the biggest thing is finding balance. Through six games, Iowa has a run-pass ratio of approximately 61-39.

“We’re not a team that’s built to throw it 50 and run it 30,” Davis said. “We want to be a balanced team because we can protect better. We’ve done much better this year protecting the quarterback.”

Defensively, the Hawkeyes are currently ranked 11th nationally in total defense, giving up an average of 290 yards per game

to opponents. Iowa has also only given up 24 third-down conversions out of 90 it has forced so far. Given the statistical track his defense is currently on pace for, defensive coordinator Phil Parker said he feels good knowing the number of big plays would be below what they were a year ago.

“I feel good about the group, how close they are, the chemistry. I think we have more depth,” Parker said. “I think there are more guys that are capable to go on the field and perform at a high level to win.”

Iowa plays four games between bye weeks, with three of them coming against teams Ferentz and his staff aren't entirely familiar with. One of those three teams is the Hawkeyes' next opponent – Ohio State. Iowa's last meeting with the Buckeyes came in 2010 and the only other encounter Ferentz has had with current Ohio State coach Urban Meyer came in the 2006 Outback Bowl when Meyer coached Florida.

Ferentz said time would be spent by him and his staff studying the Buckeyes and that he hoped to present a game plan to his players on Sunday, which would be two days earlier than a normal game week where Iowa isn't coming off a bye.

“We don't want to do too much too soon,” Ferentz said. “But as a coaching staff, we have the chance to get a lot of work done this week and what we're going to try and do is take advantage of that time.”



Iowa offensive coordinator

Greg Davis discusses the Hawkeye offense during his press conference held Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

Assessing the offense

The biggest takeaway with the Hawkeye offense is how the number of plays has correlated with success. In Iowa's four victories this season, the Hawkeyes are averaging around 80 plays per game and they currently lead the Big Ten in offensive snaps per game after finishing last in the conference in that same category a year ago.

In Iowa's 26-14 loss last weekend to Michigan State, the Hawkeyes were only able to put together 62 offensive snaps, easily the lowest number in a game this season. When Iowa did have success moving the ball on the Spartans' defense however, it came on a pair of second-quarter possessions where the tempo accelerated from what it was and then went back to being in the second half.

Going forward, Davis said he doesn't foresee Iowa becoming strictly up-tempo during these final six regular season games like it appeared the Hawkeyes might be entering this season given the amount of no-huddle used during offseason practices.

"It's something that we'll continue to do, but we're not going to become just a team that runs to the line and tries to snap it," Davis said. "We do want to play fast, faster than we have. I think we have done that. But each ball game will be a little bit different about how we approach it."

The pace might not become quicker, but the element of speed could become more prominent. While Davis said there isn't a "magic number" of snaps he would ideally like to have junior

college transfer Damond Powell involved in, the number of snaps Powell gets going forward should increase given his comfortability with how Iowa operates offensively.

“It has been a process. Obviously, we didn’t have to teach him how to run fast. He brought that with him,” Davis said. “But we want to continue to bring him on because he is a guy that can do things with it after the catch.

“We are aware that he’s a guy that we have to keep bringing on. There’s no question.”

As for the ground game, Davis and Ferentz both reiterated the value that both running backs Mark Weisman and Damon Bullock bring to the offense, which is why both of them (when healthy) are expected to remain heavy contributors going forward. Davis brought up improvements made by Bullock over the last couple of games with both blitz pick-ups and vision, which he credited to playing a role on his 47-yard touchdown reception last weekend.

“I think earlier in the year, he was looking for some home runs and not following his block,” Davis said. “Mark brings a certain thing and I think Damon brings something that’s a little bit different and we need both of those guys functioning at a high level to be able to get what we want out of them.”



Iowa defensive coordinator Phil Parker discusses the Hawkeye defense during his

press conference held
Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2013, at
the Hayden Fry Football
Complex in Iowa City.

Assessing the defense

One striking observation from Parker's time speaking Tuesday afternoon was the analytics he mentioned. Parker specifically made mention of how Iowa has blitzed around 15 percent of the time (59 times out of 394 snaps) and how 73 percent of those 59 blitzes have proven effective for the Hawkeyes thus far.

Parker also shared his thought process on when he opts to use nickel packages on third down plays versus staying in the base 4-3 look Iowa uses. He said a lot of it depends on distance, the number of yards an opposing offense needs to move to chains.

The trade-off when Iowa does use nickel is an extra defensive back – which so far this season has been sophomore cornerback Sean Draper – comes in the game for senior linebacker Anthony Hitchens, who currently leads the Hawkeyes with 59 tackles through six games. Hitchens' play thus far has forced Parker to give more thought to whether he wants to take him out whenever Iowa forces a 3rd-and-long.

"He plays full go all the time in practice," Parker said. "Last year, he had a lot of tackles. This year, I think he just understands where the play is going and see its faster and he's full go."

As far as the defensive line is concerned, Parker said he was pleased with what he has seen with the current 7-man rotation Iowa has taking place along the front four. The non-starters part of that rotation include junior defensive end Mike Hardy (who saw more snaps than usual against Michigan State due to Dominic Alvis leaving the game with an undisclosed injury) and

sophomore defensive tackle Darian Cooper, who Parker said is essentially a fifth starter. It also features Nate Meier at defensive end in third-down situations where the Hawkeyes go to their nickel package.

Then there's the group with the biggest question mark – the secondary. It's a group that has drawn the most criticism due to opposing offenses being able to convert big passing plays for scores, with the most recent being a pair of touchdown passes from Michigan State last weekend that were both over 35 yards each.

Parker said a lot of the issues have to do with fundamental technique and he stresses the importance of having a memory bank to his defensive backs so they know what mistakes not to continue making.

"You're on an island, everybody sees it," Parker said. "There's a lot of guys up front making mistakes that nobody knows about. But once you give up one back there, everybody knows about it.

"You've got to have a good memory. You got to have a good file cabinet and remember the things that you need to remember and be able to pull them up of splits and alignments and the formations and then you've got to be able to have a short memory when things go bad for you. You've got to be able to drop it and go to the next play."

Assessing special teams play

For someone who in years past has shown restraint from speaking publicly during his team's bye weeks, Ferentz faced the media Tuesday and briefly took questions before letting his coordinators share their insights.

As one might imagine, the topic of special teams was discussed in light of last weekend's 26-14 loss to Michigan State, in large part because the Spartans pulled off a fake punt where

punter Mike Sadler ran for 25 yards (more yards than Iowa had on the ground total) into Hawkeye territory. The play ultimately led to Michigan State field goal that made it a two-possession game with the Spartans extending their lead to 23-14.

Iowa's return unit on the field for that fake punt consisted of wide receiver Riley McCarron filling in for an injured Kevonte Martin-Manley as the return man and then the following blockers: receivers Jordan Cotton and Jacob Hillyer, tight end George Kittle, fullback Macon Plewa, linebackers Travis Perry, Cole Fisher and Quinton Alston, and defensive backs Maurice Fleming, Nico Law and Gavin Smith.

To put this into perspective, none of those 11 players were on the field for the other fake punt Iowa gave up this season to Northern Illinois, which occurred with the Hawkeyes lined up in "punt safe" with their starting defense sans free safety Tanner Miller, who came out for that play to allow Martin-Manley to line up as the return man.

Following the game, Ferentz made a comment about he might consider not having a return set up ever again. He reiterated the thought again Tuesday afternoon, adding that he wasn't being facetious about it.

"When you do that, to block guys, you have to turn and go with those guys just to shadow them," Ferentz said. "When you do that, you open the door. Michigan State did a good job of taking advantage of that, to their credit."

In the last 44 games dating back to 2010, Iowa has surrendered four successful fake punts (including the one last weekend), two successful fake field goal attempts (both of which happened in 2011) and four onside kicks – all of which occurred in separate games each of the past four seasons. The Hawkeyes' record in these games where opponents have successfully executed a special teams gimmick is 2-8, with the

two wins being this year's 27-21 victories over Iowa State (the most recent onside kick) and the 2010 season opener against Eastern Illinois (the first fake punt).

Despite all of that however, Ferentz believes the entire body of work thus far in 2013 has shown Iowa making progress in football's third phase and that there isn't any sort of overthinking taking place as players continue to fit in the schemes installed by first-year assistant coach Chris White.

"We're going the right direction," Ferentz said. "We went backwards the other day on that phase. But again, I'm judging six weeks and I think there's room for improvement there. I think we have reason to be optimistic."

TRANSCRIPTS (courtesy of UI Sports Info.): [Kirk Ferentz/Greg Davis/Phil Parker \(10/8/2013\)](#)

10/8/2013: 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:

"You know, we're coming off a tough game, a tough loss. It was disappointing, certainly. Michigan State played an excellent

football game. So we'll take this week to re-group a little bit and try to move forward and get ready for our next opponent."

On where Michigan State's defense ranks among the ones Mark Dantonio has had after playing the Spartans this past weekend:

"Well, my guess is Mark would tell you to just let the season play out and dictate that. But I can just tell you first-hand they played an extremely strong game defensively the last week against us. It really didn't come as a surprise.

"We were obviously hoping to move the ball better and score more points and we only came up with 14. But you know, if you just go back to last year, three of the bigger games they played – Ohio State, Michigan and Wisconsin – if you average those up in regulation, those three opponents averaged 14 points, too.

"I don't think it's a new phenomenon. They played excellent defense and they certainly lost some good players from a year ago, but they replaced them with very good players, too, and they played an excellent game Saturday."

On the role fullback Adam Cox has played on the team this year:

"I think Adam is a great story. You know, he came here a couple of years ago, pretty much an unheralded walk-on. We certainly had plenty of those. But he's just a guy that shows up. He has got a great attitude, first and foremost, and that was one of the first things you noticed about him. You also noticed he wasn't the biggest guy in the world, or certainly wasn't when he first got here.

"But he has worked extremely hard every turn of the way and then last year about this time is when we moved Mark Weisman to the running back position. The down side of that was we lost a really talented fullback. So when we first went into

spring practice earlier this year, we certainly had a strong need to try and locate somebody that could maybe help out and Adam and Macon Plewa – both of those guys – have just had really good springs. They got an opportunity and they stepped in there and did a great job with it.

“So it’s a real credit to Adam. But he’s a tremendous person. He has got a great attitude, a very positive attitude and a very strong work ethic. He’s a tough guy and at that position, there’s not a lot of glory and you don’t get to touch the ball too often. But you better enjoy blocking and you better enjoy being part of the team and he has just done a great job at that position.”

On how Cox has fit into his tradition of walk-ons at Iowa:

“Yeah, we’ve had success. The first guy I’m thinking about is Sean Considine, who is from the Illinois area. Sean came over here from Byron and ended up being a three-year starter for us and was part of a Super Bowl team last year.

“So we’ve had some great luck with guys from Illinois and also with guys from Iowa. You think about guys like Dallas Clark, Bruce Nelson, and you can go right down the list. We’ve had some great people come through our program. I’m just really happy for Adam and I’m very proud and appreciative of his efforts.”

On the status of his players that were injured last weekend against Michigan State and if the bye is a good thing this week:

“You know, we’ve really been relatively fortunate thus far this year, injury-wise. We haven’t had too many that have really inhibited guys. I guess we hope maybe that fortune continues a little bit because we’d have a handful of guys who would be questionable if we were playing Saturday. If there’s good news I guess, we’re not.

"I just came out of a medical meeting this morning and I'm pretty optimistic we should have everybody back toward the end of the week, if not Sunday. So that's good news for those guys and the handful of guys we lost in the game last Saturday."

On what makes Michigan State's run defense as good as it is:

"Well, they play great team defense. That's usually what it is. Sometimes, a team might have a front that's just overwhelming or in the back end. They're good at every turn. They were good a year ago as I kind of cited here a few minutes ago. But like everybody, you graduate players each year and they graduated some guys that have moved on to the NFL.

"But the guys they've replaced them with, they just fit right in and that's part of the culture, I'm sure, with that leadership they get. It probably starts there in the middle with that middle linebacker. You know, he has been there a long time and they just play great team defense. That's the key to being successful.

"There's really no weakness in their front, in the front seven and then certainly in the back end. When you get that working together, with guys that are on the same page and very well-coached, they clearly know what they're doing on every turn and it makes it tough."

On the impact Michigan State's corner play has on the run game when it's able to play man coverage:

"It does. It allows their safeties to be more involved and they do a good job there. But if you look at our first play the other day, that's a pretty good example. You know, we blocked the ball pretty good and blocked the play pretty clean on the interior. Our receiver came in, blocked their safety and did a great job on that and then their corner was right there to make the tackle.

"We only had a 3-yard gain and I don't think you could block it any cleaner than that, so their corners do a nice job covering, but they also do an excellent job of tackling. You know, they're not those kind of NFL guys that just play basketball out on the edges. It's a really good defense."

On what he thinks of Michigan State linebacker Max Bullough and if he reminds him of other Spartan players he coached against:

"I'd go back to Percy Snow. All the way back in the '80s, they had some pretty good guys then, too. So they have a tradition of really good middle linebackers and I think he has been a four-year starter. It seems like six years. But he's a tremendous player and it's a real credit to him."

"He's just obviously a very productive guy, but from the looks on the sideline and from watching film, he looks like a real strong team leader on top of that. That's what you want with a middle linebacker, certainly, and he fits the bill."

On if the lack of organization with 7-on-7s is becoming a dangerous concern to him in the recruiting world:

"You know, I'm not sure if it's there yet to the red-alert stage. But we're seeing some things, I think, in football that would be a little concerning to me if I was a high-school coach or if I was a parent of a high-school athlete, which I was. I had three boys that played high-school football. But none of them could run, so it wasn't a big deal."

"But yeah, I think we're going down that road a little bit and hopefully, there's a way to contain things. Just keep it appearing healthy for the people involved, for the players involved."

10/7/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 101 (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

Last weekend, the Minnesota Golden Gophers played at Michigan without their head coach Jerry Kill with them on the sidelines. He wasn't with them in Ann Arbor because he had suffered a seizure just before the team left Minneapolis. This was the second seizure Kill has suffered since this season began and the fifth documented seizure he has since becoming Minnesota's head coach in 2011.

Kill publicly revealed last year he has epilepsy and has since been open about dealing with it, along with other past health issues he overcame long before taking over the Golden Gopher football program. There was also a report that Kill had recently had his medication adjusted by doctors, which likely led to his latest seizure.

Many outside the program are wondering why and how he could still be coaching given his condition. Three weeks ago, Minnesota athletics director Norwood Teague held a press conference to reiterate his backing of Kill as the Golden Gophers' head coach. This was the right thing for him to do and those suggesting he needs to stop coaching because of his

condition are misguided.

Kill's condition is something he has learned to live with and is going to continue to live with for the rest of his life. The seizures aren't anything new and they're going to continue to occur well beyond the day he's no longer coaching Minnesota. In fact, a seizure he had while coaching at Southern Illinois led to a proper cancer diagnosis from doctors who were checking his health then.

Because Kill has managed to live his condition, so has Minnesota. There's a protocol in place for every episode he has, so it's not as if the Golden Gophers are continually being caught off guard whenever an episode does occur. His assistants have been working with him long enough that they know how their roles change whenever Kill does have a seizure.

When it was realized he wouldn't be with the team at Michigan, defensive coordinator Tracey Claeys assumed Kill's coaching duties over the weekend and there wasn't any hesitation on his part to do so.

If Kill is qualified to handle coaching Minnesota – and make no mistake, he absolutely is – then the fact he deals with epilepsy shouldn't honestly matter. If his condition was such that he shouldn't coach, that's a decision his family would probably suggest he'd make and one that he would probably be cognizant enough to make. The fact that his family continues to stick by him and what he does for a living is all one needs to know.

It's one thing if questions about what's he getting paid to do surface. If Gopher fans have concerns about his in-game strategy or matters of player personnel, that's their prerogative as fans. But if/when the day comes that Kill's job comes into question, him being an epileptic shouldn't factor into any future decisions made by Teague and given what Teague has said, it doesn't appear they will.

Kill has made Minnesota a far better football program than it was when he first got there. As long as he's continuing to do that, there's no reason for anyone to say he shouldn't do his job.