

2013 Spring Football position breakdowns: Tight Ends (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Before last season began, the talk at Iowa surrounding its tight end position was that it would be a position of strength, a position of depth and one that would be highly utilized in 2012.

The depth was there and the potential was there for it to be a strength for the Iowa offense. But it wasn't really utilized enough to be a strength, which was one of numerous factors why the Hawkeyes sputtered offensively last fall.

Looking at Iowa's tight end group this spring, the depth is there again. The only tight end from last season that isn't back is Zach Derby, who graduated. Otherwise, C.J. Fiedorowicz is back for his senior season and the Hawkeyes also bring back other key pieces such as junior Ray Hamilton and sophomores Jake Duzey and Henry Kreiger-Coble.

All four players had their moments last season, but the one who stands out is Fiedorowicz. Nearly one-third of his catches from a year ago came in the season's final two games against Michigan and Nebraska, and if he's able to carry that over into 2013, the potential is there for Fiedorowicz to possibly lead the Hawkeyes in receptions, depending on how things shake out in the receiving corps.

The other three tight ends mentioned are all going to see the field in some capacity this spring and fall, but the question becomes how much they will be used. Hamilton and Duzey saw

playing time early on last season, mainly in part because of their blocking. Meanwhile, Kreiger-Coble caught on towards the end of the season as a threat in the passing game.

Two other things are worth noting right now as it pertains to tight ends. One is that they basically have a new position coach in D.J. Hernandez, a graduate assistant who takes over for David Raih (now at Texas Tech) and is also the brother of New England Patriots tight end Aaron Hernandez. How much of an impact Hernandez has with this group as opposed to Raih's impact last season remains to be seen.

The other noteworthy item has to do with Iowa's 2-deep this spring, which listed a Y-back instead of the fullback many have been accustomed to seeing over the years. Duzey was listed as the No. 1 Y-back, with Kreiger-Coble right behind him. This is basically the equivalent of an H-Back, which is used in the NFL.

Looking more in-depth at this, it's really nothing new because the Hawkeyes had many instances last season where the use of two tight ends took place. The fact that Iowa is going as far as listing this on its 2-deep now suggests that the coaching staff recognizes its tight ends weren't used as frequently as they probably should have in 2012.

Between the uncertainty at quarterback and the question marks surrounding the receiving corps, it might be wise for the Hawkeyes to find ways for the tight ends to become more involved in the offense, especially if they become more run-oriented this fall given what's in place at running back. It doesn't hurt to have more blockers on the field and it wouldn't hurt this team to use these guys more if the coaches really do continue to view it as a strength of this offense going forward.

2013 Spring Football position breakdowns: Wide Receivers (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

If there was a position that underwhelmed in 2012 for the Iowa Hawkeyes, it was the receiving corps. Between the drops, miscommunications with quarterback James Vandenberg and that only a handful of touchdowns were even caught by receivers last season, this is probably the one group that needs the most work this spring.

One major change took place in the offseason, as Erik Campbell is out as the receivers coach and in his place now is Bobby Kennedy. This change was schematic-based, as Kennedy had worked alongside offensive coordinator Greg Davis for seven seasons on Mack Brown's staff in Texas. Kennedy also spent the last two seasons as an assistant at Colorado.

While the change might prove to be a welcoming one long term, Kennedy is going to have his work cut out for him. Iowa loses the services of Keenan Davis, but does return junior wideout Kevonte Martin-Manley, who actually led the Hawkeyes in receiving last season.

Martin-Manley is the unquestioned leader of this group, and quite frankly, he kind of took that role away from Davis last season – not because Davis diminished as a receiver, but because Martin-Manley showed significant improvement in this area as the season progressed.

Beyond Martin-Manley however is a lot of unproven. Not unknown, but unproven.

The two receivers who will get the first crack at playing alongside Martin-Manley with the first unit are sophomore Tevaun Smith and senior Jordan Cotton. Smith has the mold of a receiver who could become that possession-type pass-catcher. Any strides he can make with his game would be hugely beneficial to Iowa in 2013, because it could enable the Hawkeyes to use Martin-Manley more in the slot like they have.

As for Cotton, his strength is his speed, which is evident by what he was able to do in the return game for the Hawkeyes last season. While he'll likely be more of a factor for this team on special teams again than as a receiver, Cotton gives Iowa another threat on the outside, which in essence takes pressure off guys like Martin-Manley, Smith and whoever's on the field at tight end or Y-back.

Then there are receivers such as Jacob Hillyer and Don Shumpert that either have little playing experience or have shown struggles with the experience they've gotten in years past. If either could show improvement over the course of the spring and during the upcoming season, it would give the Hawkeyes some much-needed depth at this position that right now, they appear to lack.

Ultimately, a lot could depend on who gets the starting nod at quarterback because the challenge these receivers have now is establishing a rapport with all three guys competing for that job when only one of them will start. But the one thing that's clear at this point in time is the receiving corps has to improve if Iowa's going to make any sort of improvements offensively.

4/10/2013: Iowa spring football notebook

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – One coach has experienced a season in the Iowa football program, while the other is completely new to Kirk Ferentz's system. One played at Iowa and coaches the position he played, while the other left a job coaching the Minnesota Vikings' special teams unit when a vacancy opened in Iowa City.

But there's one area of expertise that linebackers coach LeVar Woods and newly-named running backs coach Chris White share in common – special teams. While White is assuming the primary duty of handling Iowa's special teams in 2013, Woods will continue to play a role.

White said he looks to bring a lot of the nuances that made the Vikings' special teams area successful in the NFL last season over to Iowa, but that he finds himself leaning on Woods right now in terms of adjusting to the college game. One specific example he referenced was with the shield punting formation used by many college football teams (none of which are Iowa) that aren't allowed in the NFL.

"We're going to stick with what I know and what the kids have known," White said. "We're going to change up some fundamentals a little bit here, tweak a little here."

Woods said nothing has really been divided up yet in terms of special teams duties between him and White and that the two have been working together to create competition, specifically in space. In other words, evaluating is being done as to who can block and/or tackle in the open field on plays where a

return is involved.

He also doesn't foresee any issues working with White given how both have NFL backgrounds.

"If you don't have a familiarity with it, you don't quite understand how difficult it is to do," Woods said. "I think having that experience as a player can help.

"But also, the thing I was particularly excited about with Coach White is that he brings some of those elements to our team, some of the same schemes that I'm familiar with, having played in."

As far as White's concerned, it isn't so much statistics that matter to him, but field position and where an offense or defense is starting a possession because of what might have occurred on special teams the play before.

"I'm not a stat guy at all," White said. "I can care less where we rank in terms of in the Big Ten. I want to know where the defense gets the ball, where's their starting position. I want to know where our offense starts the drive.

"It's all what we call complementary football and that's all the job is with special teams, is to complement your offense and defense."



Iowa running backs/special teams coach Chris White discussed spring practices during his press conference

held Wednesday, April 10, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City. White joined the Hawkeyes in February after serving four years as an assistant with the Minnesota Vikings.

RBs knowing the 4 Bs

White said his biggest emphasis this spring with the running backs group is getting everyone to understand what he called the 4 Bs – “Base, Bend, Balance, Burst.”

It’s the “Bend,” White said, that he has spent the spring with junior running back Mark Weisman on more than anything else. Weisman, who got placed on scholarship last January after walking on as a transfer from Air Force in 2011, led the Hawkeyes in rushing last season. White noticed Weisman not having much of the “bend” to his game as he watched 2012 film and said he has already noticed a major improvement through six spring practices.

“He made a couple of jump cuts the other day in practice and I was like, ‘Wow,’” White said. “It’s step one here just to see the guys improving.”

Meanwhile, the one “B” probably being emphasized most with fellow junior running back Damon Bullock right now is “balance.” Not so much in terms of run versus pass since Bullock has experience playing receiver, but in terms of pass protection when the ball isn’t coming his way.

White said he looks for Bullock to become a more physical and more complete player as he shows improvement with little things such as blocking.

“He made a block on a blitzing linebacker the other day and

earned the respect of the whole team, including the head coach and the assistants.”



Iowa linebackers/special teams coach LeVar Woods discussed spring practices during his press conference held Wednesday, April 10, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City. Woods will enter his second season as a full-time assistant.

Woods reflects on what he learned

Woods had the background playing linebacker both at Iowa and in the NFL and even returning to Iowa to work in an administrative assistant role. Last season presented him with his first full-time coaching opportunity and as he reflected back on that Wednesday, he said he learned a lot.

He described learning from in-game coaching errors, as well as learning how to better work with the linebackers he coaches and how to handle recruiting, as Woods' main recruiting area is around Dallas and other parts of Texas. As far as the football side of things is concerned, Woods is looking to make more of an effort to not be “too perfect” with coaching.

“Sometimes, I think you can kind of paralyze a young man when you tell him do this, do this, do this, if he does that, do

this,” Woods said. “So I’m working hard to just let guys go, let them play.”

Woods described the first time he traveled to Dallas to recruit and how he felt like a door-to-door salesman that just carried around a notebook, learning about all the different high schools. He said going back there in the winter was much easier as he had more of an understanding for how to handle recruiting.

“It’s fun because it’s very welcoming, very inviting,” Woods said. “I love recruiting Texas. It is competitive because every school is down there.”

Trinca-Pasat rehabbing shoulder

Among the handful of players made available to the media Wednesday afternoon was junior defensive tackle Louis Trinca-Pasat, who is sitting out this spring due to offseason surgery performed on his left rotator cuff.

The operation itself wasn’t a surprise, as Ferentz had even said prior to the start of spring practices that Trinca-Pasat wouldn’t be available again until fall camp. What Trinca-Pasat revealed Wednesday, however, was a bit of a surprise.

As he discussed his shoulder injury, Trinca-Pasat said it occurred back in 2011 and confirmed he played the entire 2012 season with a torn rotator cuff. Last season, he recorded 40 tackles while appearing in all 12 of Iowa’s games.

Trinca-Pasat called it “a minor repair” and expects to be back for fall camp. While disappointed he can’t be on the field practicing this spring, he’s doing what he can to stay involved.

“I’m just taking a lot of mental reps, learning and just getting a better feel for the game,” Trinca-Pasat said.

[4/10/2013: LeVar Woods/Chris White press conference](#)

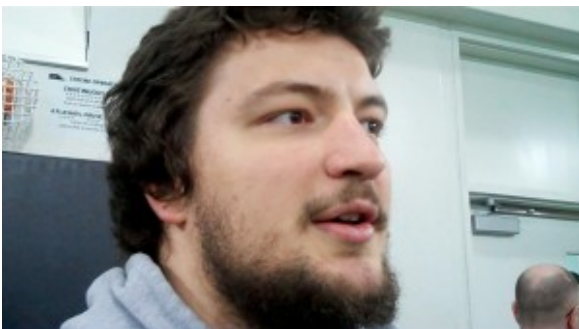
4/10/2013: Iowa player audio with photos (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – On Wednesday, four members of the Iowa football team spoke to the local media to discuss how things have gone two weeks into spring practices.

Below is audio from the following players – junior defensive tackle Louis Trinca-Pasat, senior wide receiver Don Shumpert, senior linebacker Anthony Hitchens and senior kicker Mike Meyer:



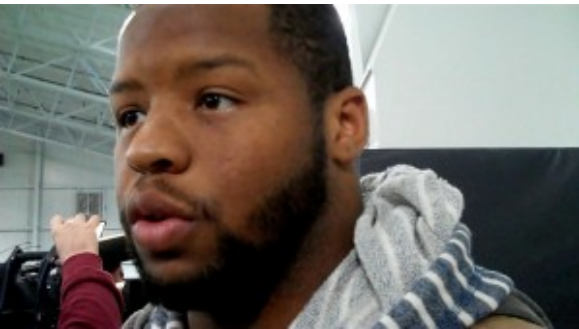
Louis Trinca-Pasat, April 10, 2013

[Louis Trinca-Pasat, junior defensive tackle](#)



Don Shumpert, April 10, 2013

[Don Shumpert, senior wide receiver](#)



Anthony Hitchens, April 10,
2013

[Anthony Hitchens, senior linebacker](#)



Mike Meyer, April 10, 2013

[Mike Meyer, senior kicker](#)

4/10/2013: Kirk Ferentz/James Morris teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Below are written transcripts of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz and senior linebacker James Morris from Wednesday's Big Ten spring football teleconference:

Ferentz's opening statement:

"Certainly, it's always good to get back on the field and we've been out there now a couple of weeks and I've just been very impressed with the team's work ethic and their attitude. It has been very, very positive. We certainly have a long way to go, like most teams I'm sure. But it has been good to be out there and working."

On having Sunday's open practice in West Des Moines and whether the fan reaction to it signals it being a positive for his team:

"Well, yeah. I hope it is. I think we're all real excited about it, certainly. It's something that we kicked around during the out-of-season and just felt like it was really an opportunity for us to just maybe say 'Thank you' to the people out in Central Iowa and also from Western Iowa and even over in Nebraska that travel to Kinnick [Stadium] during the fall. You know, people have been great for as long as I can remember, supporting our program."

"So it's just a chance I think for us to say 'Thank you' and then also, it's a nice opportunity I think for our players just to break up the routine a little bit and you know,

instead of left-foot, right-foot, you know, break up the routine and I think they always enjoy the opportunity to play in front of fans. So it should be a great environment and we're really looking forward to it on Sunday."

On if he remembers the blocked FG by now-LBs coach LeVar Woods that led to Ferentz's first win at Iowa in 1999:

"Well yeah, because I'm not sure we would've won the game if it wasn't for that. We were hardly a prolific outfit at that point, but you know, it was the only game we won, against Northern Illinois. LeVar is just a tremendous person, first and foremost, and when we got here in '99, he was one of the guys that emerged as a strong leader. When you think about guys like LeVar and Kevin Kasper in that first group, they were seniors in 2000 and never got to play in a bowl game with us. But guys like that and you know, certainly, some other guys around the team like Aaron Kampman, etc.

"So LeVar is a great leader, a great player for us. I think he carved out a really nice career in the NFL for seven years and you know, we were just really excited to have him join the staff last year and you know, a big part of the reason LeVar was able to have a nice career in the National Football League was his commitment to special teams.

"Teaming him up with Chris White, I think, has been a real good match, and then Kelvin Bell, who was a former player for us as well and one of our grad assistants, those three guys are doing an awful lot of work in the special teams area and I've liked what I've seen so far this spring."

On how the three quarterbacks are shaping up and if anyone has emerged yet at the position:

"Yeah, we've only been on the field six times, so it's probably about right where we expected it. At this point, it's still a 3-horse race and you know, we really came into it with no preconceived notions. We've been rotating all three players

virtually in every couple of snaps, so they work with the 1s, they work with the 2s and the 3s.

“You know, at this point, I think it’s still just a jump-ball for all three guys, but I’ve been pleased with all three of them. They’ve been doing a lot of good things out there and they’re doing some things that need to be worked on as well and that’s probably what you’d expect at this point.”

On how both interiors (O-Line and D-Line) are currently shaping up:

“You know, on the offensive line last year, we lose two pretty good players. Matt Tobin really did a nice job. He came here as a walk-on and played well for us two years ago and then last year, continued to improve. I know he did a good job. Unfortunately, he had to move out to left tackle when Brandon Scherff was injured and Matt really responded well. But I guess the good news with the injuries to Brandon and Andrew Donnal was that it created some opportunities for some other guys. So replacing Matt and then replacing James Ferentz, who has been a three-year starter.

“But I feel good about where we’re at right now. I think we’ve got six, seven, eight guys that are competing pretty well and then another two guys underneath there that I think are going to be pretty good players. It’s just a matter of how soon, so we’re trying to push them along just a little bit.

“Defensive line, we lost two seniors on that side as well and we were a really young group last year, so I hope that will show up in a positive way for us this coming fall. So we should be a little bit more veteran on both sides and hopefully, that’s something that works to our advantage.”

On what his new assistants have brought to the program in terms of ideas and energy:

“You know, I think you look at each of the three and it’s a

little different story with all three of them. You know, start with Bobby Kennedy. He worked with Greg [Davis] at Texas for 6-7 years together, so they have a relationship and great rapport and Bobby has familiarity with what Greg's looking for, so I think there has been some good dialogue there. Bobby is a high-energy coach. He has done a great job with the receivers. It's still a young group and I think they've responded well.

"If you move to Chris White, our most recent hire, Chris has done a good job with our backs and our backs are certainly further along than they were last year. You know last year at this time, we weren't sure what we had back there. I think we have a much better handle on that right now, so he has done a great job and I think he has also done a really nice job with our special teams thus far. He spent the last four years solely working on special teams, so I think there's some real upside there from that standpoint.

"And then on the other side, Jim Reid is a guy who is a veteran guy. I remember watching Jim coach as an assistant coach at UMass back in the late '70s when I was teaching school at Worcester Academy and it was the first time I met Jim. I was really impressed with him back then. He has done a lot of things since then. He has been a head coach, Division I-AA. He has coached in the National Football League and then most recently, the coordinator at Virginia.

"So he has got a real depth of experience, a lot of expertise and knowledge in a lot of different systems. He has really been a good veteran presence, I think, in that room and you know, if you look at our defensive side – both with Phil [Parker], Reese [Morgan] and LeVar; they were all in first-year positions, if you will, last year with new positions and new roles. So I think that experience has really added to things there.

"Things have come together. We've had a lot of transition now,

certainly, in the last 15-16 months, you know, but it has been fun to watch it all come together. I'm really pleased with the way the staff interacts and the way they're teaching and I think our players are responding in a real positive way."

On if he thought of any philosophical changes or anything else he does want to change moving forward during the offseason:

"Uh, yeah, I don't know how in-depth they are. But you know, the one obvious thing is we didn't play the way we like to play. I'm not sure we were playing always in a way that's representative of the way we'd like to play. There are exceptions to that, certainly.

"In the first half of the season, we did some good things and played real well in our first couple of Big Ten games. But for whatever reason, we kind of fell off after that and you know, there were some different factors involved, injury being one of them, but the bottom line is we just didn't get it done the way we wanted to.

"The one good thing, I said this afterwards that when you think about going 4-8, if there is anything good about that, there's no passing the buck. There's no sticking your head in the sand, you know, a play here, a play there. We have to do a better job in all areas and that starts with me. So it's just where it is.

"All that being said, it wasn't much fun, but we're excited about what's in front of us right now and the last time we were in this situation, we had two really good years that followed. But that's not just going to happen because it happened a couple of years ago. We're going to have to make it happen and that's the fun of this whole thing."

On how he'd explain the mix of playing well along the offensive line both physically and mentally:

"You know, it probably just depends on the individual. It is a

position that typically takes a little longer for guys to, you know I don't want to say master because I don't think you ever master it, but it takes a little bit longer typically for guys to play proficiently in the offensive line.

"I would compare that to the quarterback position. Those are usually the two areas that take a little bit longer. But it also depends on what you're doing offensively and there are so many styles of play right now in college football. But in general terms, I think it is one of those positions where there's a mix. You're on the right track there, and really, both of them are very important.

"It's hard to be good physically if you don't know what you're doing mentally and conversely, the other way, you know what to do but if you can't execute what's being asked of you, that's not getting the job done either. I don't think it's quite to the extent of playing quarterback, but it's closer to that class I guess in terms of the degree of difficulty and what it takes in terms of proficiency in both of those areas you're alluding to."

On how the tight end position has changed and whether Iowa is looking at it differently now than five years ago:

"Uh you know, I guess yes and no is my answer to the question. I think, you know, there's no question that people in the NFL are ... I think smart people have always valued that position and you know, I guess maybe you're seeing the tight ends a little bit more involved in the passing game.

"But if you go back to the '90s, the best teams in the NFL in the '90s, you look at Dallas with [Jay] Novacek and Denver with [Shannon] Sharpe, those guys weren't necessarily knock-back type blockers, but they were guys that were proficient blocking and effective, but not necessarily the big, physical guys. But they gave you something in the passing game that people always had to respect.

"Now you look at some of the guys in the NFL right now and we had Dallas Clark come out of here 10 years ago and he has had a really nice career. So it's constantly evolving. But I think again, in college football, it's interesting this year. It's a big year in the draft for tight ends.

"But over the last decade, there haven't been a lot of tight ends playing college football because a lot of people have moved away from that position and typically playing with more of a big receiver-type guy in that spot or flexing them out. Again, there's such variety in college football right now that it's hard to really put it in one small box."

Morris' opening statement:

"Spring, so far, is going well. We're pretty much healthy across the board, or about as much as you'd expect to be. We're about seven practices in, have one today. We're still kind of ironing the kinks out, shaking the rust off, but the energy's good and I like where we are as a defense."

On the play of fellow senior linebacker Anthony Hitchens:

"Anthony was a first-year starter last year, but he's a guy that has kind of played intermediately for two years before. Really throughout his career, he has kind of moved around. First he was a safety and they moved him to running back. Then the next thing you know, through strength training or whatever, he kind of blew up and he was a 220-pound linebacker.

"So they moved him to linebacker and since then, he has really come into his own. He's a good player. A really instinctive player. Very athletic. The thing he does best is make plays in space. He's a big hitter and he's becoming more and more of a leader for our team every day, so he has practiced well and is going to continue to do so. I anticipate big things for him this fall."

On whether he feels Iowa is now back to having the type of success it has had recently at linebacker with guys like himself entering their senior year:

“Um, I feel like maybe we have an opportunity to have some of that success. I’m certainly not going to say we’re there yet. I’m not the person to ask for that. You know, I like the group we have and I think we have an opportunity to be successful, but none of that is certain. I mean, we’ve got to make it happen. So, that’s what we’re trying to work on this spring and hopefully the results will be there in the fall.”

On if he’s glad about having the opportunity to have an open practice somewhere besides Iowa City this Sunday:

“Yeah, sure. I mean, even for us, you know, it’s just something to break the monotony of spring ball. You know, I think people get in a routine and you know, this will be something different and a chance for us to be in a different environment and be around a lot of fans that either don’t get to go to games in the fall or maybe this is one of the few opportunities that they would have to see the team practice.

“There’s a lot of Iowa fans out in West Des Moines and that area, so it’s exciting for us to obviously go do something new and also maybe give a little bit back to those fans that aren’t able to participate in the fall.”

On what he’s seeing out of the D-Line, and in particular, from tackle Louis Trinca-Pasat:

“Louis had surgery at the end of the year, so he hasn’t been practicing. He has just been trying to come back from an injury. I think, I’m not a doctor, but we’re anticipating that he’s going to be back and at full speed by the time fall camp comes around.

“But regarding Louis’ play last fall, I can say that it wasn’t a surprise to anybody in Iowa City or anybody on our staff.

Louis is a guy that has been working really hard and he really improved just in the last 365 days. I mean, just a total flip from the player he was to the player he is now, so that's exciting for us.

"We also have had a lot of guys that have been really practicing well, just really a couple of days into spring ball. Two guys, well, four I guess – Drew Ott, he has been playing really well. He was a true freshman last year and he'll be a sophomore next year. Mike Hardy is a guy that's really coming on. He was sort of a late-bloomer, so to speak. And then Carl Davis is another guy that, he battled some injuries, but right now, he's really playing at a high level and if we can just get him to be really consistent, I think he can be a good player. And then Dom Alvis is another guy, he's a fifth-year senior who has battled some injuries. But I think he likes where he is physically right now and that has been showing on the practice tape."

On what 2-3 things need to improve most defensively in order for success to happen this fall:

"You know, I think the biggest thing is consistency. We do things well. You know, we play zone on defense extremely well and I don't know what it is about our mindset that makes us more proficient there than in the open field. But I think if we can kind of channel some of that attitude or some of that approach to everything we do on defense, I think we're going to be more successful and then also, I think that maybe as players, more on-field communication and football IQ needs to improve if we expect to be better and that's something that has been improving.

"I would say we're better now than we were in the fall and that has been an area of emphasis for the coaches and some of the veteran players to try and improve that culture and that intelligence, that awareness. Because we know that we're going to need it if we're going to be able to win in the Big Ten

today with some of the offenses being what they are.

"You know, there's really not a lot of time in between plays, so the smarter you can be and the headier you can be in-between plays, before plays, after the plays, I think that's going to help you be more successful and that's what we're trying to develop with all 11 guys."

On what mark his class has made at Iowa so far and what kind of mark he wants to leave as a senior this coming season:

"You know, that's a good question. I think you know, if we're being really honest, the mark we've left so far if we're being completely honest and objective here, I don't think we can say it's a good one or a particularly strong one. That's just being brutally honest and I don't like that.

"I mean, we were 8-5 my freshman year and my class had very little impact on that. I mean, some, but it's hard to argue that we made a significant impact. And then the year after, we were 7-6, which wasn't what we wanted. And then this last year, we were 4-8. So, I'm not happy about it, if we're being honest. But I am excited that we've got one more opportunity to change things and that's what we're really focused on, what we can do to get this thing turned around and really kind of leave a legacy here, leave some mark that we're proud of.

"That's my goal and that's the goal of a lot of my teammates right now, is to leave something that we can be proud of and the fans can be proud of, so when you look back, you can say, 'Hey, you know what? The first part wasn't what we wanted, but we got this thing straightened out.'"

2013 Spring Football position breakdowns: Running Backs (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Running back has become a much-maligned position when it comes to Iowa football and this proved to be no different in 2012.

While the Hawkeyes got contributions from running backs like Damon Bullock and Greg Garmon and even had a bright spot emerge in the form of walk-on fullback Mark Weisman, Iowa had issues running the football last season and that played a big role in the Hawkeyes finishing 4-8.

Garmon is now out of the picture after he opted to transfer three weeks following the end of the season. Bullock and Weisman (now on scholarship) return to the Hawkeye backfield, as does sophomore running back Jordan Canzeri. This is the good news for the Hawkeyes as they go through spring practices right now.

The question however becomes which running backs get utilized and how, especially with a new position coach in place. Lester Erb, who served on Ferentz's staff for 13 years, wasn't retained and has since taken the running backs coach job at Nevada. In Erb's place is Chris White, who had spent the past four seasons as an assistant with the Minnesota Vikings. White will also assume the primary responsibility of coaching special teams, another aspect of Erb's job when he was at Iowa.

Canzeri returns after missing all of the 2012 season due to a torn ACL injury suffered at this time last spring. He was

actually cleared medically to practice midway through last season, but head coach Kirk Ferentz opted to hold him out and allow Canzeri to take a medical redshirt, giving him three more years of eligibility.

Another player who also returns to the mix is redshirt freshman running back Barkley Hill, who looked to be part of the mix last season before suffering a season-ending knee injury during fall camp. Hill also had an offseason arrest and Ferentz has already suspended him from Iowa's season-opener against Northern Illinois.

But the main guys in play here right now are Bullock and Weisman. Bullock entered last season as the team's No. 1 running back before suffering a concussion against Northern Iowa in Iowa's third game. In Bullock's place came Weisman, who started the Hawkeyes' first three games at fullback, but became a primary ball-carrier for the team when it had success on the ground with him in the backfield.

Given the versatility both players possess, Ferentz looked to use packages last season where both Bullock and Weisman were in the backfield. But aside from early in the season before Bullock's concussion and before Weisman started getting any carries as a feature back, it wasn't meant to be. When one of them was healthy, the other was hurt and there was never a point where both of them were on the field together.

If there are two things worth watching this spring, one is how these players handle having a new position coach in place and the other is seeing how much cohesion can take place when Bullock and Weisman are both on the field since they're both going to get the first cracks at carries.

When Iowa does want to utilize the fullback, Weisman can always move back there and be a lead-blocker for Bullock. When Iowa uses more than three wide receivers in a set, Bullock can line up in the slot given his prior background as a receiver

in 2011 and Weisman can line up in the backfield behind whoever takes over at quarterback.

More will develop here over time, but these are the names that are worth watching at running back right now as Iowa progresses through spring football.

4/8/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 94 (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

Although Rutgers University won't officially become a Big Ten member until July 2014, the events of this past week are hard to ignore, partially because of the fact that Rutgers is soon to join the conference.

Last week, videos surfaced into the public eye of the school's head men's basketball coach, Mike Rice, physically and verbally attacking his own players during team practices. His behavior had him suspended for three games by the school, but before these videos were released, that's as far as the punishment went.

Rice has since been fired and the school's athletics director, Tim Perneti, resigned from his position on April 5. There's a

good chance more heads will roll at Rutgers over the next few weeks.

The focus here won't be on what happened. How anyone could see those videos and not think Rice deserved to lose his job is mind-boggling and there's no debate about how badly Perneti and the rest of the university completely botched this whole matter. The focus here is going to be on what happens going forward.

Again, this is a school that's soon to join the Big Ten. Now the guy largely responsible for that becoming a reality is no longer there and whoever is hired to take Perneti's place as Rutgers' athletics director has an enormous mess to clean up.

Yes, it might just be one program partaking in the acts of Rice and his staff. But what's not to say this won't have a negative effect on other programs in the Rutgers athletics department? This incident isn't just giving the Scarlet Knights' basketball team a black eye, but the entire university is receiving backlash. What's not to say other sports won't use this in recruiting against Rutgers?

Look at other schools with scandals recently and the effect is there on other sports. A perfect example of this would be right in the Big Ten actually with Penn State. Yes, the crimes committed there were far more despicable because children were involved, but the point is it wasn't just Penn State's football program suffering consequences. Chances are other Penn State teams have had troubles recruiting the last few years because, "Why would any parent want to send their child there?"

That same question could be applied here. Why would any parent want to send their kid to Rutgers right now? Even if other head coaches there like Kyle Flood (football) or C. Vivian Stringer (women's basketball) are known to be nothing like Rice towards their student-athletes, the image of Rutgers as a

whole has been tainted.

This has become a situation that everyone in the Big Ten landscape ought to keep their eyes on between now and when Rutgers finally becomes a Big Ten member. Because its long-term future is going to play a heavy role in who gets hired as the new AD, who that new AD hires as the school's new men's basketball coach and what types of steps Rutgers can take from the errors of its ways that have been unearthed over the past week.

2013 Spring Football position breakdowns: Quarterbacks (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

For really the first time in the Kirk Ferentz era of Iowa football, the Hawkeyes have a complete mystery needing to be solved at the quarterback position before the 2013 season gets underway next fall.

With James Vandenberg graduating after taking snaps each of the past two seasons, a 3-way battle has presented itself this spring at signal-caller. What makes this even more intriguing is that while all three players in competition were on the roster and have a year's worth of experience under offensive coordinator Greg Davis, none of the three took any snaps for the Hawkeyes in 2012.

Perhaps having the slightest of edges right now mainly due to

having two years on campus and thus two years in the Iowa football program is sophomore Jake Rudock. The Florida native redshirted in 2011 when Ken O'Keefe was still in charge of the Hawkeye offense and spent all of last season listed as Vandenberg's back-up on the 2-deep.

Meanwhile, the other two quarterbacks battling Rudock for the starting job both redshirted last season, but under different circumstances. Junior Cody Sokol played two seasons at Scottsdale Community College in Arizona before transferring to Iowa following the 2011 season. Because Sokol redshirted in 2012, he still has two years of eligibility remaining.

Then there's redshirt freshman C.J. Beathard, a Tennessee native who was a late addition to Iowa's 2012 recruiting class. In fact, his commitment to Iowa came two days before National Signing Day and four days before O'Keefe resigned from his coaching duties to join Joe Philbin's staff with the Miami Dolphins.

The bottom line is there won't be an answer by the end of spring football as to who starts for Iowa in 2013. In all likelihood, this is a position battle that probably won't be decided until a week before the Hawkeyes' season opener against Northern Illinois.

But that doesn't mean there isn't a chance for some separation to take place and quite frankly, the best thing that could happen over the next three weeks here is for one of these three guys to start separating himself from the others. Regardless of which one of these guys it ends up being, any separation that can take place sooner than later will probably be a good thing for Iowa down the road.

Thinking back to prior quarterback competitions Iowa has had under Ferentz, the most recent (and probably most chronicled, to be honest) came in 2008 when there was debate over whether Jake Christensen or Ricky Stanzi should be under center. It

wasn't until one-third of the 2008 season was completed before Ferentz finally went with Stanzi taking over for good. The longer this drags out, the more scrutiny there's going to be on Ferentz and his staff this fall.

The circumstances might be different for each guy though. In the case of someone like Sokol or Rudock, there might be more pressure to create a wider gap than on someone like Beathard, who'd have the advantage of having four years of eligibility should he end up being the reason why the competition to start at quarterback is neck-and-neck.

Once this is settled, one way or another, how the rest of Iowa's offense will project out in 2013 should become a bit easier to decipher.

Hawkeyes make Des Moines open practice official

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

The Iowa Hawkeyes will conduct an open practice April 14 at Valley Stadium in West Des Moines. Details for the event were finalized by the UI on Thursday, eight days after Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz confirmed a report from *KCCI-TV's* Andy Garman [about the Hawkeyes contemplating an open practice near the state capital](#).

The practice, which was originally slated for April 20, was moved up six days and will start at 1:30 p.m. Central that afternoon. According to a release sent out by the UI on

Thursday, Valley Stadium's West and Southeast Gates will open at noon and a ticket (which is free of charge) will be required to enter.

"This is an opportunity for us to reach out to our Central and Western Iowa Hawkeye fans that support us so loyally during the fall in Kinnick Stadium," Ferentz said in a statement. "The staff of the West Des Moines Community School District has been great to work with in putting all the details together. We appreciate the cooperation we have received in the planning and organization and look forward to the event."

Tickets will be made available starting April 6 at 14 different Hy-Vee locations across the central and western portions of the state. The UI's release also mentions no parking being made available directly at Valley Stadium that afternoon and that tailgating outside the stadium is prohibited.

Iowa will also conduct its annual open practice – the Hawkeyes' final spring practice – at Kinnick Stadium on April 27.

4/3/2013: Bobby Kennedy/Jim Reid press conference transcripts

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Below is a PDF from the Iowa sports information department featuring the complete transcript from spring football press

conferences of Iowa wide receivers coach Bobby Kennedy and
linebackers coach Jim Reid on Wednesday in Iowa City:\

[4/3/2013: Bobby Kennedy press conference transcript](#)

[4/3/2013: Jim Reid press conference transcript](#)