

2/25/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 88 (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

This week's edition is a follow-up on what was written last week and essentially a mea culpa. Less than 24 hours after last week's version of *State of the Big Ten* was published, the conference made a joint decision along with Iowa and Nebraska to push their game scheduled for Feb. 21 back two days later to Feb. 23, which was past Saturday.

As it turned out, Winter Storm Q (as it was named) didn't end up having quite the impact as originally expected on the Lincoln, Neb., area last week. Yet kudos needs to be given to all parties involved in pushing the game back from a Thursday night to a Saturday afternoon.

There were sacrifices made as a result of doing this. From a TV perspective, the game went from being televised nationally on ESPN2 to only being carried via BTN2Go, which isn't necessarily accessible to everyone in the states of Iowa and Nebraska.

From a recruiting perspective, the head coaches – Iowa's Fran McCaffery and Nebraska's Tim Miles – probably were forced to re-arrange their travel schedules as both teams had a bye originally scheduled for that weekend and both probably had recruiting trips planned.

Iowa's travel schedule was completely thrown out of whack. The Hawkeyes had to fly to Lincoln that Friday morning and were delayed flying home after the game.

But these sacrifices all pale in comparison to what the fans and other game day personnel would've had to go through on Thursday had the game gone on as scheduled and had Winter Storm Q had the effect on Lincoln that it was projected to have when the postponement was originally announced. This is why the decision to push the game back was wise and why all parties involved deserve kudos.

Even though the amount of snow accumulated wasn't anywhere close to what was originally forecasted, the amount of wind in the area would've made driving a challenge for anyone, especially with snow flurries that were in the forecast. Instead, this game road crews in both Iowa and Nebraska enough time to make sure Interstate 80 – which connects both Iowa City and Lincoln – was cleared off as best as it possibly could be.

Given past precedence by the conference, the fact this move occurred is somewhat surprising. But again, both teams weren't scheduled to play last weekend, which made the move sensible to make. It also didn't seem to have any sort of effect on either team as far as the game itself went.

The safety of every party involved was put into account. This is far more important than making sure any sort of athletic event goes on as scheduled. It's refreshing to see this be taken into account when the conference makes decisions such as this one.

COMMENTARY: How open is open?



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses recent coaching changes during a press conference held Friday, Feb. 22, 2013, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – For years, Iowa under head coach Kirk Ferentz has developed a reputation of closing itself off. What happened inside the Iowa football complex remained there and it was Ferentz’s way or the highway.

Friday afternoon, Ferentz held a press conference to discuss the three coaching changes recently made to his staff. Gone are former assistants Erik Campbell, Darrell Wilson and Lester Erb. In house now are Bobby Kennedy, Jim Reid and Chris White, who was officially named running backs coach/special teams coordinator on Friday.

As Ferentz began to discuss these changes, as well as how things would change with Iowa’s recruiting, the underlying theme of openness developed with each word uttered.

Last year, openness was something discussed but never really put to practice by the Hawkeyes and a 4-8 season was the end result. It's one thing to talk about being open. It's another to actually show it.

While Ferentz remained guarded about certain topics that were broached on Friday, to his credit, he was more straightforward about things such as who would coach what position. As far as being more open about things, it's a start.

This isn't to suggest Ferentz has done a complete 180 over the last three months. There are certain aspects of what he does and how he operates that won't ever change. But the vibe given off Friday is that he's at least cognizant of the fact that he has to adapt if Iowa is going to avoid seasons of 4-8 or worse in the short term.

"I don't think we need to throw our whole system out, that's for sure. But fresh ideas are good, certainly, and if there's someone that can do something to supplement what we're already doing, that's a great thing," Ferentz said. "Those are things we talk about in meetings and that's how we grow. Getting people to throw ideas out there is a good and healthy thing."

Whether the topics were about who handled what duties, whether kids from areas not being as heavily emphasized in recruiting (i.e. Florida) anymore would still be targets, or about players maybe changing positions this offseason, Ferentz mentioned being "open to anything."

Some might say he's merely saying this now to appease the fan base, only to then resort back to old ways that might have worked 10 years ago, but aren't working now. This is what ended up happening in 2012 and it backfired.

But that being said, Ferentz has a chance to rectify the things that changed the perception around him among the majority of the fan base and right now at least, he appears willing to take those steps. The stigma of going 4-8 has stuck

with him throughout the offseason and will probably continue to stick with him until Iowa opens its 2013 season six months from now against Northern Illinois.

This is a time where Iowa has to show it can be open to its fans and for Ferentz to show he can be open to anything that could make his program better. Entering his 15th season as the Hawkeyes' head coach, he's now the only constant from Day One to now.

Time will tell as to whether 2013 will be a success for Iowa and whether the remainder of Ferentz's tenure remains an overall success. But it appears the wake-up call was delivered. Now the question becomes just how open will things become in 2013.

"I think everybody has been motivated by the fact that we didn't play as well as we wanted, didn't have the record we wanted, didn't go to a bowl game," Ferentz said. "If there's a positive in that, sometimes it's a good reminder."

Coaching duties

With White's addition to the staff, Ferentz said Friday the staff was set. As far as the changes made are concerned, White would coach running backs, while Kennedy takes over coaching wide receivers and Reid will assist LeVar Woods with coaching linebackers. Defensive coordinator Phil Parker will also handle coaching defensive backs, which was his role on the staff prior to being promoted defensive coordinator last year.

As far as special teams go, White will oversee the unit as a whole while Woods and graduate assistant Kelvin Bell assist, whereas before, Erb and Wilson both oversaw special teams.

"We've had discussion on that and will continue to have discussion," Ferentz said in reference to talks he has had with White. "The other guys have been really good about

chipping in and I think that will remain the same.”

Meanwhile, recruiting is a little more convoluted. Defensive line coach Reese Morgan will continue to recruit the state of Iowa and nearby states, and Eric Johnson will keep his recruiting territories the same. Offensive line coach Brian Ferentz, along with Reid, will both take over Erb’s territory of Chicago and the younger Ferentz will be assisted now with recruiting the state of Ohio by both Reid and Parker.

Parker will also oversee Michigan as he has, while Woods will keep his recruiting areas of Kansas City and Texas and be assisted in Texas by both Davis and Kennedy, both of whom have connections to the state having been Longhorn assistants. White’s duties will mainly consist of the East Coast, which was Wilson’s territory before.

Looking ahead to the spring

Iowa will conduct its annual Pro Day on March 25 and then start spring practices two days later. The team’s open practice at Kinnick Stadium is currently slated for April 27.

Ferentz didn’t mention any specific position changes as far as player personnel goes, but did say the Hawkeyes would be without the services of both junior defensive tackle Louis Trinca-Pasat and senior offensive lineman Nolan MacMillan this spring. He also said fullback Brad Rogers and linebacker Jim Poggi have taken medical redshirts, marking the end of both players’ careers.

TRANSCRIPT: [Kirk Ferentz, Feb. 22, 2013 press conference](#) (Courtesy: UI Sports Info.)

2/18/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 87 (premium)

Every Monday, we will be running a weekly series titled "State of the Big Ten," which will be made available to all members of HawkeyeDrive.com. This series of columns will focus on one major headline regarding the conference and go in-depth on the subject at hand.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

The Iowa Hawkeyes and Nebraska Cornhuskers are to meet inside the Bob Devaney Center in Lincoln, Neb., the evening of Feb. 21 (this Thursday). As of Monday, this game is still on pace to be played as scheduled despite reports of snow anywhere between 12-16 inches hitting the eastern portion of Nebraska in the hours prior to tip-off.

The Big Ten says it's about safety and that if the weather is bad enough, that Thursday's game might get moved back to Saturday to ensure player safety. If history is any indicator however, this game's still going to go on as scheduled, no matter how much snow gets dumped on Lincoln, Neb.

Now, one thing to consider here is that neither Iowa nor Nebraska has a game this weekend, so the game being pushed back to Saturday could conceivably be pulled off and quite frankly, this is what should occur.

But here's the problem – this weekend has been deemed a weekend off from games for both these teams for close to six months now. Chances are both head coaches, Fran McCaffery and Tim Miles, already have recruiting trips lined up these weekends. In Miles' case specifically, he might even have recruits visiting Thursday night and attending the game. He's

not going to want to have that opportunity be missed out on.

Then there's the television angle. Right now, this game is scheduled to be televised on ESPN2. As much marketing and promoting as the Big Ten does for its programs, games on networks like ESPN, ESPN2 and CBS are a commodity these programs are going to crave. This is a chance for both Iowa and Nebraska to showcase its teams.

In the case of the Hawkeyes, this is an opportunity for viewers around the country – including perhaps some members on the NCAA Selection Committee – to see what kind of team Iowa has and how it might stack up against other bubble teams. As for the Cornhuskers, this is the only game they have prior to the Big Ten Tournament on a network not called BTN or ESPNU. This is a chance for Miles, again, to sell his program to that same audience.

Not to mention the fact that if the game were to get postponed to Saturday, ESPN2 won't carry it still. It probably either gets relegated to ESPN3, which is only accessible online, or a deal with BTN would have to probably be brokered and who knows what that would entail.

In terms of the history repeating itself facet, consider that Iowa played a home game against Michigan State with similar weather conditions taking place in Iowa City. That game still went on as planned on the night it was scheduled for, so there's a precedent. The Hawkeyes are going to fly to Lincoln regardless. If they're able to leave Wednesday and get there before the storm starts the crux of its damage, the game's happening Thursday night, period.

Logistically, it could be pushed back and again, it would probably end up serving in the best interests of everybody – players, coaches, officials, fans and media – to have this game on Saturday. But the odds of this actually happening don't look likely, no matter how much of a blizzard is set to

embark on Lincoln.

Kennedy, Reid join Iowa staff

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz announced the additions of Bobby Kennedy and Jim Reid to his coaching staff and also confirmed the departure of running backs Lester Erb in a release sent out by the UI on Thursday. The hires of both Kennedy and Reid are effective immediately according to the release.

Kennedy takes over as the Hawkeyes' wide receivers coach, filling a void left by Erik Campbell. He recently spent the last two seasons holding the same position at Colorado and before that was the wide receivers coach at Texas, where he worked alongside current Iowa offensive coordinator Greg Davis.

Meanwhile, Reid joins the staff as "a defensive assistant" after previously serving as the defensive coordinator at Virginia the past three seasons. No specifics were provided as far as which group he would work with. His hire comes one day after defensive backs coach Darrell Wilson left to take over a similar position at Rutgers.

"Both men have coaching experiences that will complement and supplement our staff and team in a positive way," Ferentz said in a statement. "Jim and Bobby are tremendous individuals who will be a good fit on our campus and great representatives of our university and football program."

Erb's departure leaves an additional vacancy on Iowa's staff.

He leaves after serving as an assistant on Ferentz's staff for the past 13 seasons, including the last five seasons as Iowa's running backs coach. Both Erb and Wilson also split the coaching duties for Iowa special teams.

In the same statement, Ferentz said he wished both ex-Iowa assistants "the best moving forward."

Wilson leaves for Rutgers

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Darrell Wilson has left his role as Iowa's defensive backs coach to take a similar coaching position at Rutgers. This was first reported by [ScarletReport.com's Sam Hellman](#) and later confirmed [in a release](#) sent Wednesday afternoon by Rutgers, who will spend one more season in the Big East before joining the Big Ten along with Maryland in 2014.

Wilson had spent the last 11 seasons on Kirk Ferentz's staff, serving as a linebackers coach for 10 years before moving over to coach defensive backs last season. He also handled special teams coaching duties along with assistant Lester Erb and was Iowa's primary recruiter in New Jersey and nearby states.

This will be Wilson's second stint as a Rutgers assistant, as he coached the Scarlet Knights' running backs for one season (1999) before leaving to join Barry Alvarez's staff at Wisconsin.

Wilson is the third assistant to leave Iowa's staff this offseason. Earlier this month, Ferentz confirmed reports of wide receivers coach Erik Campbell no longer being on staff,

as well as graduate assistant David Raih leaving to take a position at Texas Tech.

2/11/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 86 (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

Major news emerged Monday afternoon from Big Ten headquarters in Park Ridge, Ill. It was there where the Big Ten's football coaches and athletics directors held a meeting and publicly released a statement regarding NCAA legislation with recruiting that would go into effect as early as July 1 of this year.

Basically, this new legislation would lead to recruiting deregulation. What Big Ten coaches and ADs expressed concern over in a statement released Monday are three things:

- 1. Limitations on the number and duties of coaches, and along those lines, elimination of recruiting coordination functions.*
- 2. Deregulation of modes and numerical limitations on communication.*
- 3. Elimination of printed recruiting materials and video/audio*

legislation.

Barring delay or complete upheaval, these changes to the recruiting game won't bode well for the Big Ten as a whole. The conference already has a muddled reputation right now in terms of football. With such recruiting deregulations being put in place, a conference like the SEC is going to prosper.

The Big Ten addresses concern about how these changes would affect the families and coaches of high-school prospects. If a coach is able to text recruits on a daily basis and keep tabs on the kids they're targeting, what's not to say they won't do it? They'll dedicate the time to it if they deem it necessary and let's face it, recruiting is the most vital part of a coach's job description.

In a sport like basketball, this is a more reasonable thing because there are two signing periods (fall and spring) and there's a huge difference between only having to keep tabs on four or five kids as opposed to 25, which is the number of football scholarships allowed to be filled per year by a program not dealing with scholarship reductions (i.e. Penn State).

There have been a lot of things where the Big Ten has usually been the least willing to adapt, like the whole thing with the college football playoff going into effect in 2014). But this is something they seem to have a reasonable argument toward why more time should be spent thinking about the ramifications of such legislation.

Football is a different beast from every other college sport there is. With such legislation, coaches won't be able to take a break from trying to recruit someone they're targeting, otherwise another program placing more emphasis in recruiting is just going to swoop in.

If the conference continues to struggle in terms of recruiting, then the quality of football played in the Big Ten

won't improve anytime soon and the results that happen in bowl games or anytime a marquee Big Ten squad plays a marquee SEC squad won't change, either.

Add in the whole dynamic of a football playoff, and it could reach a point where even with conferences expanding, only a select few are going to be able to compete for national championships on a regular basis.

These next few months are going to be telling because if nothing happens and these changes all go into effect, the Big Ten will have even more of an uphill climb as a conference than it already has right now.

Two Hawkeyes heading to 2013 NFL Combine

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Former Iowa cornerback Micah Hyde and quarterback James Vandenberg were the lone two seniors from the 2012 squad to receive invitations to the 2013 NFL Combine, scheduled to take place later this month at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Ind.

Both Hyde and Vandenberg will spend four days in Indianapolis, with workouts taking place on their final days there. Vandenberg will be the first to take part in QB drills, doing so on Feb. 24. Hyde will participate in defensive back drills on the final day of the event, which is Feb. 26.

Vandenberg has already taken part in the Raycom College

Football All-Star Classic, while Hyde was one of three players from last year's squad that played in the East-West Shrine Game.

No official date has been set yet for Iowa's Pro Day that will be held in Iowa City. The 2013 NFL Draft takes place April 25-27.

2/6/2013: 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 National Signing Day press conference on Wednesday in Iowa City:

[Coach Ferentz – 02 06 13](#)

Iowa football recruiting: Class of 2013

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – The Iowa Hawkeyes' 2013 recruiting class consists of 21 players – 20 out of high school and one junior college transfer in wide receiver Damond Powell.

This is the official list of recruits sent out by Iowa on Wednesday of those who have signed national letters of intent to play for the Hawkeyes.

Nathan Bazata DL 6-2, 280 lbs. *Howell, Neb.*

Ike Boettger TE 6-6, 235 lbs. ***Cedar Falls, Iowa***

LeShun Daniels RB 6-0, 215 lbs. *Warren, Ohio*

Colin Goebel OL 6-5, 280 lbs. *Lisle, Ill.*

Brant Gressel DL 6-2, 280 lbs. *Centerville, Ohio*

Andre Harris WR 6-0, 170 lbs. *Kirkwood, Mo.*

Josey Jewell OLB 6-2, 200 lbs. ***Decorah, Iowa***

A.J. Jones WR 6-3, 190 lbs. *Dallas, Texas*

John Kenny OLB 6-2, 215 lbs. *Carmel, Ind.*

Desmond King DB 5-11, 185 lbs. *Detroit, Mich.*

Derrick Mitchell, Jr. WR 6-1, 190 lbs. *St. Louis, Mo.*

Jonathan Parker RB 5-8, 175 lbs. *St. Louis, Mo.*

Damond Powell WR 5-11, 180 lbs. *Toledo, Ohio (Snow College)*

Malik Rucker DB 6-0, 170 lbs. *Minneapolis, Minn.*

Nic Shimonek QB 6-4, 196 lbs. *Corsicana, Texas*

Reggie Spearman LB 6-3, 225 lbs. *Chicago, Ill.*

Akrum Wadley RB 5-11, 170 lbs. *Newark, N.J.*

Solomon Warfield DB 6-0, 185 lbs. *Lorain, Ohio*

Sean Welsh OL 6-3, 285 lbs. *Springboro, Ohio*

Derrick Willies WR 6-4, 205 lbs. *Rock Island, Ill.*

Jon Wisnieski TE 6-5, 220 lbs. *West Des Moines, Iowa*

Iowa confirms staff shake-up

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Two days before National Signing Day, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz officially confirmed three transitions on his coaching staff – two outgoing and one incoming.

Leaving the football program are Erik Campbell and David Raih. Campbell's departure was first reported on Jan. 3 and [later confirmed by a source to HawkeyeDrive.com that same day](#). As of Monday, Campbell hasn't officially accepted a coaching job elsewhere. He had served as Iowa's wide receivers coach for the last five seasons.

"I am appreciative of his many contributions to our program and wish him the best in the future," Ferentz said about Campbell in a statement released Monday.

Meanwhile, Ferentz acknowledged Raih had accepting a position in the Texas Tech football program under its new head coach, Kliff Kingsbury. Raih is a former Iowa quarterback who served as a graduate assistant under Ferentz and handled the coaching duties with tight ends during the 2012 season.

The addition to Iowa's program is D.J. Hernandez, who will serve as a graduate assistant after handling similar duties

previously at Miami (Fla.) under Al Golden. Hernandez [tweeted he was taking a job at Iowa on Jan. 4](#) and prior to Monday's announcement had already been listed in the UI's online directory. In the same release sent out Monday by the UI, Ferentz confirmed what Hernandez said last month about taking over Raih's position of coaching the Hawkeye tight ends in 2013.

Hernandez is the brother of New England Patriots tight end Aaron Hernandez, who had Brian Ferentz as his position coach in 2011 prior to Ferentz joining his father's staff in 2012.