

My tribute to John Streif

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Three years ago, I was in Kansas City covering the CBE Classic along with three of my colleagues at *The Daily Iowan*. The Iowa men's basketball team was participating in this event and played Texas and Wichita State.

After the Hawkeyes' game against Wichita State that second night, the four of us went to grab dinner after we all finished up our coverage. We went to a bar-and-grill across the street from the Sprint Center and ordered wings. As we finished eating, we all asked for separate checks. The waitress came back and said all four orders were taken care of. At first, we were in disbelief. Moments later though, we figured out what happened.

Earlier that night, we saw John Streif at this restaurant and were briefly chatting with him and a few of the basketball managers. One of the guys I was with realized Streif had paid for our meals and almost immediately, the four of us approached him at the bar to thank him.

On Thursday, the UI sent out a release saying Streif is retiring from his positions as athletic trainer and travel coordinator, effective Jan. 2, 2013.

Having now covered Iowa football the last six years and Iowa men's basketball the last four, Streif is as nice of a person as I've met. Not just among those working within the Iowa athletics department. I mean, ever. Period. That night in Kansas City, he didn't have to pay for four 20-somethings' food orders. But he did because that's the type of person Streif has always been and still is today.

I can't think of a single instance where I saw him and he didn't say 'Hi' or even shake my hand while greeting me. Heck, as recently as last week, he saw me from a distance over at Carver-Hawkeye Arena and waved hello.

Earlier, I mentioned how Streif also coordinated the UI's travel. When I was the *DI's Pregame* editor, he went out of his way to assist me with planning road trips. If he had an extra room available wherever the football team was staying, he always held a reservation for me and the party I would be covering that road game with.

In 2008, Streif gave 21-year-old me one less thing to be concerned about during the months our newsroom couldn't be used because of the flood that hit Iowa City. For that and everything else he has ever done for me, I'm forever grateful to him.

But the stories I told are just a few. Over the years, I've heard similar stories about Strief from many others. There was a party held in his honor at the Iowa Memorial Union back in May 2010. The list of attendees was a "Who's who?" in the Hawkeye football and basketball worlds.

([Here's the story](#) I wrote from that event in 2010 that pretty much sums up what he meant to those who played and coached at Iowa. I should also mention shortly after this was published, I received a hand-written note from Streif thanking me for the article and I still have that note in my possession today.)

Every football and basketball player I've ever spoken to loved him. I remember talking to a former football player once who said Streif was the only trainer he would ever allow to tape up his ankles before practice or before a game, simply because he felt he was always in good hands whenever Streif worked on him.

Every coach held Streif in high regard. I remember one of Ferentz's press conferences a few years back where he talked

about the 2001 Alamo Bowl – his first bowl as Iowa’s head coach. He mentioned how he took note of everything Streif had to do behind the scenes just to make sure every facet of the team’s trip to San Antonio went smoothly. After the Hawkeyes won that game, Ferentz presented Streif with the game ball.

He is so beloved at the UI that Ronnie Lester, one of the school’s all-time basketball greats, requested the training facility at Carver-Hawkeye Arena be named in Streif’s honor as he donated \$100,000 to the arena’s renovation project that was just completed last year.

Shortly after news broke Thursday of his retirement, former Iowa basketball player Duez Henderson tweeted “[He is IOWA](#),” with a link to the school’s release. In fact, athletics director Gary Barta is quoted in that very release saying “To many, he is the face of Iowa athletics.”

Whenever I think about Streif, his acts of kindness are what first come to mind. Not just the ones he has displayed towards me over the last six years, but towards everyone I know who has ever crossed paths with him – athletes, coaches, administrators, other reporters, Hawkeye fans, you name it.

He was the consummate professional while also being as compassionate a human being as one can meet. There’s no doubt in my mind he’ll continue to be the same genuine person post-retirement that he was long before I ever met him.

Like many others, I wish John Streif nothing but the best and look forward to seeing the UI recognize him with the proper send-off he deserves.

12/24/2012: State of the Big Ten, Volume 79 (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

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Last week, Wisconsin named Gary Andersen its new football coach, replacing Bret Bielema after he bolted to fill the coaching vacancy at Arkansas. Andersen had been the head coach at Utah State for the last four years and guided the Aggies to an 11-2 record, a WAC championship and a 41-15 win over Toledo in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl this year.

One of those two losses, oddly enough, came at the hands of the Badgers back in September. Wisconsin won the game 17-16, but Utah State had a chance to win it with a field goal that ended up missing the uprights altogether in the waning moments.

Given what Andersen accomplished at Utah State, many national pundits have viewed this as "a home run hire" for Wisconsin athletics director Barry Alvarez. That remains to be seen. But in terms of how the timeline unfolded, this may have worked out extremely well for the Badgers.

Alvarez is serving as the team's interim coach for the Rose Bowl next week, which looked inevitable from the moment it was announced Bielema left. But here's what warrants reiteration: Andersen has already coached Utah State to a bowl win this month. He took the Wisconsin job after seeing the remainder of

his team's season through first.

For anyone wondering why that might be significant, think about recruiting. Yes, this is currently a dead period in the sense that coaches aren't allowed to visit recruits who have committed to their programs. With this coaching transition, high-school seniors who have already committed to Wisconsin are going to want to meet Andersen and get to know him before deciding whether to stay on board or de-commit and look elsewhere.

Because Alvarez is overseeing all of the Rose Bowl preparations, all Andersen has to be worrying about right now is retaining Wisconsin's 2013 recruiting class. That's it. He can't visit any of the Badgers' commits, but he was cleared by the NCAA after taking to job to have contact via telephone with these kids, which makes complete sense.

The coaching search reached a point where Alvarez had to act, especially since Andersen wound up being his guy. Sure, this could have dragged on beyond New Year's Day, but that would've been detrimental for Wisconsin. That's why even though Darrell Hazell is still coaching Kent State in its upcoming bowl game, Purdue acted when it did on hiring him as its new head coach. If Purdue had waited for Kent State's season to end, someone else would've lured Hazell away.

Andersen is also someone who was a hot commodity, but because his entire coaching career had pretty much been in the state of Utah, the odds of him leaving looked slim prior to Wisconsin's vacancy coming about.

In terms of its short-term future, Wisconsin made a bold move that looks like it could work out well. The questions about the program long-term were going to be there no matter what, at least as long as Alvarez was the AD. But as far as 2013 is concerned, the way this has been handled is continuing to be handled is boding well for the Badgers.

12/20/2012: Talkin' Hawks podcast (2012 Iowa season recap)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

All season long, we have conducted a series of weekly podcasts called "Talkin' Hawks," previewing each upcoming game for the Iowa Hawkeyes throughout the 2012 season.

In previous years, the final podcast of the season would be a look-ahead to whatever bowl game Iowa was about to be playing in. With the Hawkeyes having a 4-8 season however, there's no bowl game to specifically discuss this year.

In this two-hour edition, former Iowa defensive back [Chris Rowell](#) (2005-09) joins me – as he has all year long – to recap the Hawkeyes' 2012 season, look ahead at their future position-by-position and share his thoughts on every 2012-13 bowl game that is either a BCS bowl or features a Big Ten or top 25 team (there are 16 of them that are discussed).

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank two groups of people. First, I want to thank all 12 of the guests I had on the podcast throughout the season:

Steve Nitz (DeKalb Daily Chronicle), Travis Hines (Ames Tribune), Jesse Gavin (1650 "The Fan" in Cedar Falls), Nate Schneider (Mt. Pleasant Morning Sun), Matt Humbert (Fringe Bowl Team Blog), Joe Rexrode (Detroit Free Press), Ben Jones (StateCollege.com), Kevin Trahan (Inside Northwestern), Dustin

Dopirak (Bloomington Herald-Times), Mike Carmin (Lafayette Journal and Courier), Mark Snyder (Detroit Free Press) and Brandon Vogel (Hail Varsity)

In the three years I've done this podcast, this was the first year that I successfully had guests for each edition that was posted during the week of an Iowa football game.

Additionally, I'd also like to take this opportunity and thank all of you who have signed up to become a *HawkeyeDrive.com* paid subscriber. Your support is greatly appreciated. [For those interested in becoming a member, we offer a three-day free trial, as well as monthly and yearly subscriptions of either \\$9.99 per month or \\$89.99 per year.](#) By becoming a member, you will have access to every bit of content posted, including anything labeled "premium" in the headlines.

Merry Christmas to you all and I hope you enjoy our final edition in 2012 of the "Talkin' Hawks" podcast, exclusively on *HawkeyeDrive.com*:

[Talkin' Hawks podcast \(2012 Iowa season recap\)](#)

Twitter handles:

HawkeyeDrive.com – [@HawkeyeDrive](#)

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2012 "TALKIN' HAWKS" ARCHIVE:

11/29/2012: [Championship Week](#)

11/21/2012: [Nebraska](#)

11/15/2012: [Michigan](#)

11/8/2012: [Purdue](#)

11/1/2012: [Indiana](#)

10/25/2012: [Northwestern](#)

10/18/2012: [Penn State](#)

10/11/2012: [Michigan State](#)

10/4/2012: [Bye Week](#)

9/27/2012: [Minnesota](#)

9/20/2012: [Central Michigan](#)

9/13/2012: [Northern Iowa](#)

9/6/2012: [Iowa State](#)

8/30/2012: [Northern Illinois](#)

8/23/2012: [Season Preview](#)

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

12/17/2012: State of the Big Ten, Volume 78 (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.

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Last week, the Big Ten Network posted a survey on its web site with questions pertaining to the future of football divisions once 2014 arrives and both Maryland and Rutgers are official members.

It provided three options, one of which was a geographical split. The three options aren't what matter here because anyone with a pulse can recognize that revising them East-West makes the most sense and should've been done from the get-go.

The survey itself is flawed. Why? Because there's no way the Big Ten is settling at 14 teams. The conference is going to expand again. It's not a matter of if, but when.

And while football coaches might not want to hear this, here's what would make the most sense once it reaches 16 – pods. Instead of two divisions with eight teams, have four pods with four teams that can be based geographically. From there, each pod winner could be grouped for a four-team playoff to determine a Big Ten champion (sound familiar?).

Right now, the only legitimate drawback would be if the Big Ten wanted to go beyond 16, which it might. Then pods might not make total sense. But it's worth repeating: The final number will not be 14.

Three things to consider with pods: First, how they're divided up. Two of the pods would be dependent on which schools get added. But if one pod features the four Western schools that would all be natural rivals (Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin), and then the second pod features the two Illinois schools and two Michigan schools, that's half of it right there.

The winners of those pods can meet in Chicago, the winners of the others can meet at either FedEx Field in Washington or MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. You know, the two parts of the

country where the Big Ten just enlarged its footprint. It would be consistent with Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany saying how a second branch would be built out East to go along with the current one in the Chicagoland area.

Oh, and doing this could also keep the Big Ten's championship game at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, which is as good a setting as there is.

Secondly, and this pertains to the whole competitive balance thing that resulted in Legends and Leaders. It's possible to have a geographic split where Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio State and Penn State are all in separate pods. Heck, there could still remain the possibility of a Big Ten title game featuring the Wolverines and Buckeyes, just like there's potential for right now.

Lastly, pods would make scheduling easier. Yes, coaches are going to be against having a ninth game and might be against a semi-playoff leading to a conference championship. But that's already the direction college football is going anyway with a national four-team playoff in, oh yeah, 2014. Plus, Delany has made clear he wants more conference games.

By using pods, a nine-game schedule can be done where each team plays everyone in its pod and then two teams from each of the other pods. This would allow all 16 teams to play everyone at least twice over a four-year span. Or another option would be playing all four teams from another pod and then two cross-overs from the remaining two pods (this would allow Michigan and Ohio State to keep playing annually). Either way, this could work and would make logistical sense.

So going back to this survey, does it really matter? There's a playoff coming in 2014 and there are at least two more teams joining the Big Ten in 2014. The timetable for further expansion here is pretty obvious, and that's not only for the Big Ten, but for a conference like the SEC as well.

It's not about how the dominoes fall because once one falls, so will the rest. It's a matter of when they fall. Because whether it's in January or July, this is something that's inevitable.

Oh, and the same can also be said for the "Legends" and "Leaders" monikers. The sooner everything gets sorted out, the better off everyone – the conferences, football coaches, players, media and fans alike – will be.

Garmon to transfer

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Iowa freshman running back Greg Garmon asked for and was granted a release from his scholarship Wednesday, [as first reported by 247 Sports' Bob Lichtenfels](#).

Garmon, who was a four-star recruit from Erie, Pa., appeared in 10 games for the Hawkeyes in 2012, rushing for a total of 122 yards on 38 carries. He also hauled in eight catches for 57 yards receiving and returned five kickoffs for a total of 118 return yards. Garmon did not record any touchdowns this past season.

His lone start came in Iowa's 38-14 loss to Penn State, filling in for then-injured running back Mark Weisman. Garmon missed two games – a 32-31 loss to Central Michigan and a 31-13 win over Minnesota – due to an arm injury suffered during the second quarter of the Hawkeyes' 27-16 victory over Northern Iowa back on Sept. 15 at Kinnick Stadium.

Garmon is the fourth running back to leave the program either

voluntarily or by dismissal during this calendar year. Last January, former running backs Marcus Coker and Mika'il McCall both transferred and on Aug. 1, head coach Kirk Ferentz dismissed De'Andre Johnson from the team following a pair of legal run-ins in late July.

12/10/2012: State of the Big Ten, Volume 77 (premium)

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By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

In the wake of Bret Bielema leaving Wisconsin to become the new head football coach at Arkansas just three days after guiding the Badgers to their third consecutive Big Ten title, Wisconsin athletic director Barry Alvarez revealed he would coach the team in the Rose Bowl against No. 8 Stanford on New Year's Day.

As shocking as it was when the news broke of Bielema's departure, it's just as much of a non-surprise that Alvarez would assume interim duties. This is a man who not only resurrected Wisconsin football while roaming the sidelines for 16 seasons, but pretty much resurrected that entire athletics department into what it is today.

Alvarez said he approached by the team's senior captains about coaching them since he was already there and already has three Rose Bowl victories to his name. He said for that reason, he would oblige and that this would be a one-time deal.

While the Badgers prepare for their trip to Pasadena though, Alvarez has now begun the task of searching for a new head coach. Much like when he hand-selected Bielema to be his successor following the 2005 season, Alvarez's criteria is pretty select, which could be both a good and bad thing.

On one hand, it could be good in the sense that given what Bielema left behind when he went to Fayetteville, Ark., 2013 won't be a complete rebuilding project for whomever Alvarez brings on board. However, football coaches today have to show they're capable of adapting over the long term because the sport is constantly changing before our very eyes.

It's fair to wonder if Bielema ever had a fair shot to make his own mark during his seven-year stint. Yes, Wisconsin won three straight Big Ten titles on his watch, but in the eyes of Badger fans, he was no Alvarez. One thing that needs to be established now is whoever is hired will never be Alvarez. But with that being said, they do deserve a shot at making their own name.

Nick Saban is just as iconic in Alabama now as Bear Bryant was. He has won two national titles with the Crimson Tide and could be winning a third here on Jan. 7 in what would only be his sixth season in Tuscaloosa. Yes, there were 24 years between tenures, but Saban is leaving his own mark there now.

Sure, Alvarez can hire someone that shares his ideology and could basically be a clone of him. But that might not be such a good thing long term for Wisconsin. Whoever is hired needs the shot to leave his own legacy, good or bad. Alvarez is entitled to be as hands-on as he deems necessary, but being too hands-on with Bielema over the past seven years might have

something to do with the situation today.

Now this doesn't have to be a hire made completely out of left field. The guy could have Wisconsin ties. Heck, he could have played for Alvarez or even coached under Alvarez. But the truth is as good as Wisconsin could be next year, it won't be as good as Ohio State or Michigan or even Nebraska.

If Alvarez hires a yes-man or someone who is too much like him, this program might struggle to adapt over the long haul. It's not a guarantee it will, but it might. The pressure to "win now" is prevalent in Madison like it is on any other campus, which would be reasoning for going this route.

But while it might not necessarily be beneficial to pursue someone on the outside in the short-term, over time, it could pay huge dividends for Wisconsin. It did before when Alvarez first arrived in Madison, so there's no reason to think it can't happen again now, especially with this new coach inheriting much better circumstances than Alvarez did back in 1990.

It's an interesting time in Wisconsin, especially with the Badgers playing in their third straight Rose Bowl in three weeks. It's going to become even more intriguing once someone is officially in place come Jan. 2.

12/3/2012: State of the Big Ten, Volume 76 (premium)

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major headline regarding the conference and go in-depth on the subject at hand.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Following Wisconsin's stunning 70-31 massacre of Nebraska in the Big Ten Championship Game last weekend, the Big Ten bowl lineup of seven games was set. Had Nebraska won, the lineup looked to have more of a certainty to it. But as a result of the Badger victory, there was a bit of chaos Sunday.

The three 6-6 teams (Michigan State, Minnesota and Purdue) all went where many projected them to wind up, so there weren't issues there. It came at the top with determining the three Florida bowls played on New Year's Day.

In terms of how the standings shook out in the Legends Division, Nebraska, Michigan and Northwestern all went where they probably deserved to end up. Nebraska returns to the Capital One Bowl for the second year in a row, while Michigan is in the Outback and Northwestern fell to the Gator. The intriguing point to make here though is while the Wildcats lost both their head-to-heads with the Cornhuskers and Wolverines, they did possess a better overall record than Michigan, meaning they could've been selected for the Capital One Bowl.

Prior to Saturday's title game, the talk was had Wisconsin won, Northwestern's odds of being in the Capital One Bowl would be extremely likely. For one, as just mentioned, Nebraska played in that bowl game last year, and usually a team feeling down after losing a championship game like the Cornhuskers did probably won't travel as well to the same bowl for the second straight year.

Also, because of bowl-selecting guidelines put in place by the Big Ten, Michigan wasn't allowed to be picked over Nebraska

for the Capital One Bowl had both teams been on the table. So the feeling was Northwestern, a team that overachieved this year and hadn't been to Orlando in 16 seasons, would travel well and the Capital One Bowl seemed intrigued with the idea of inviting the Wildcats.

But then something happened and instead of having Michigan or Northwestern playing Texas A&M, the match-up became Nebraska and Georgia. There has been speculation that the Big Ten got heavily involved in the selection process to ensure Nebraska didn't completely nose-dive after losing to Wisconsin, which would coincide with similar reports of the SEC doing the same with Georgia after the Bulldogs lost to Alabama.

Here's the issue though: It sets an awful precedent for conferences like the Big Ten and SEC to do this. If there are going to be bowl games and those bowls are going to send reps across the country to scout games and gauge interest of the schools they're aligned with, then they all need to be able to do their jobs. That's not to say there shouldn't be guidelines, but if, in this case, the Capital One Bowl felt more compelled to invite Northwestern than bring back Nebraska for the second time in a row, it should've been able to.

If the Big Ten is going to do this now, why wasn't this done last year after Michigan State lost the conference's title game? The Spartans were in the Capital One Bowl two years ago and would've been looking at another Orlando trip had the same precedent been used.

That's not to say Nebraska doesn't warrant playing in this game against Georgia. If the Capital One Bowl's incentive from the get-go was to take those teams if they both lost last Saturday, then that's great. But if it truly came down to the Big Ten forcing the bowl's hand as speculated, then that's a problem.

With the conference on the brink of expanding again in 2014

and with the bowl lineup likely being reconfigured next year, this might be a good time for the conferences and bowl committees to gather together and re-assess their priorities, especially with a playoff starting in 2014.

Should the bowls select based on conference standings or through their own independent criteria like they always have? If it's the latter, then let the bowls handle their business. It's their game.

Big Ten football TV schedule: 2012-13 bowl season

Below is a list of the seven bowl games this winter featuring Big Ten teams. Here is where and when you can watch each of these contests this winter:

Dec. 28:

Meineke Car Care Bowl of Texas – Minnesota vs. Texas Tech (at Houston, Texas), 8 p.m., ESPN

Dec. 29:

Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl – Michigan State vs. TCU (at Tempe, Ariz.), 9:15 p.m., ESPN

Jan. 1:

Gator Bowl – No. 21 Northwestern vs. Mississippi State (at Jacksonville, Fla.), 11 a.m., ESPN2

Heart of Dallas Bowl – Purdue vs. Oklahoma State (at Dallas, Texas), 11 a.m., ESPNU

Capital One Bowl – No. 23 Nebraska vs. No. 6 Georgia (at Orlando, Fla.), 12 p.m., ABC

Outback Bowl – No. 19 Michigan vs. No. 11 South Carolina (at Tampa, Fla.), 12 p.m., ESPN

Rose Bowl – Wisconsin vs. No. 8 Stanford (at Pasadena, Calif.), 4 p.m., ESPN

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

11/29/2012: Talkin' Hawks podcast (Championship Week edition)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Every Thursday during the 2012 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 13-7 to Nebraska last weekend and look ahead to this weekend's slate of championship games around college football, including the Big Ten Championship Game featuring Nebraska and Wisconsin. 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 Iowa not playing, there's only one segment this week. There will be one final edition this season of "Talkin' Hawks" that will be posted in a couple of weeks, sometime before Christmas. This week's edition is approximately 70 minutes long, so enjoy:

[Talkin' Hawks podcast \(Championship Week edition\)](#)

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Chris Rowell – [@Crowell34](#)

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

COMMENTARY: Disappointment felt, but the clock keeps ticking



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz conducted a season-ending press conference held

Wednesday, Nov. 28, 2012 at
the Hayden Fry Football
Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Nine months ago, Kirk Ferentz had a sudden void on his coaching staff when Ken O’Keefe, his offensive coordinator of 13 years, left shortly after National Signing Day to become the Miami Dolphins’ wide receivers coach. This move came just before Ferentz could publicly proclaim Phil Parker as his new defensive coordinator.

Three weeks later, what was deemed an emergency hire by Iowa athletics director Gary Barta was made as Greg Davis, who spent 13 years as Mack Brown’s offensive coordinator at Texas, was hired to assume the roles held by O’Keefe.

On Wednesday, Ferentz said “as far as he knew,” Davis would return as Iowa’s offensive coordinator in 2013. This announcement comes five days after the Hawkeyes concluded a disastrous 4-8 season that ended with a six-game losing streak.

Statistically speaking, 2012 was one of Iowa’s worst years in terms of offensive production under Ferentz. According to cfbstats.com, out of 124 FBS teams nationally, Iowa finished 114th in scoring offense, 105th in rushing offense, 102nd in passing offense and 117th in total offense.

James Vandenberg, a fifth-year senior who had thrown 25 touchdown passes the season before, took every snap for Iowa, the only FBS team to play one quarterback all year. In 12 games, he threw seven touchdowns and eight interceptions.

But despite all that, Ferentz’s support of Davis hasn’t wavered.

“Greg’s a tremendous football coach,” Ferentz said Wednesday. “We wouldn’t have brought him here if we didn’t feel that way. I feel stronger about the kind of coaching person he is now after working with him.”

The trajectory for this offense began as expected. Iowa struggled offensively in its first two games, but those two games were against a Northern Illinois squad that hasn’t lost since the Hawkeyes beat it 18-17 at Soldier Field on Sept. 1 and an Iowa State squad that featured a stingy defense. One had to figure there would still be a learning curve early on.

The offense began to improve over the month of September, and took an expected step back in a 19-16 win over a Michigan State team that featured one of the Big Ten’s top defenses. But then came a six-game losing streak to conclude 2012 and with it, offensive production that was inconsistent at best and dreadful at worst.

In those six defeats, Iowa scored a total of 10 offensive touchdowns. Less than two touchdowns per game isn’t enough to win in the Big Ten, even when it’s as down as it was in 2012.

This isn’t written to be an indictment on Davis or Vandenberg. Vandenberg’s playing days at Iowa are done and Ferentz made clear that Davis would be back in 2013.

Back in February, when Ferentz spoke publicly for the first time since O’Keefe’s departure, [two key points were established](#) long before the name “Greg Davis” became known around Iowa. First, what Ferentz says, goes. Second, the pressure was now squarely on Ferentz.

What Ferentz says inside the Hayden Fry Football Complex, still goes. But the pressure on Ferentz to deliver is higher than ever before. For all of his accomplishments in 14 years, society as a whole has evolved into “What have you done for me lately?”

Since winning the 2010 Orange Bowl, Iowa's record over the past three seasons is 19-19, with three of those victories coming against FCS opponents – Eastern Illinois, Tennessee Tech and Northern Iowa. This type of drop-off over a three-year span gets some coaches fired. Heck, there have been coaches such as Tom O'Brien who had a better overall record the past three years at North Carolina State yet was shown the door this past weekend.

It's also worth noting that since that Orange Bowl victory, mass media has evolved to the point that when Ferentz answers any questions, he's not only speaking directly to those who ask. He's also speaking directly to his constituency as well and lately, his rhetoric has rung hollow with that constituency.

Patience has worn thin around Iowa, but not from those who directly matter. Barta will continue to ride it out with Ferentz, who was awarded a new contract in 2010 that keeps him around through 2020. Ferentz will continue to ride it out with who he brought on last year with the attitude that better days lie ahead. This is how it worked in his early years at Iowa and how it worked during the years of 2006-07, the last time before now that Iowa football went through a downward spiral.

But what if things don't get better? If personnel – both coaching and player – remains the same and both offensive and defensive schematics remain the same, what's the reason to believe things will improve in 2013?

Yes, player personnel changes year-to-year, but unless an infusion of youth occurs on both sides of the ball this offseason and outperforms expectations, things probably won't be that much better. The premises of Davis' system and Parker's system can remain constant, but unless there are wrinkles put into both this offseason, opponents are going to know exactly how to attack them. By that point, "lack of execution" can't be used as an excuse.

At this point in time, Iowa football is like a sinking ship. Ferentz is going to either resurrect the ship and have it floating on the ocean surface again, or succumb with the ship to the bottom of that ocean.

His lasting legacy will be remembered one way or the other. Either way, the clock is continuing to tick and the level of distress is such where the legions of Iowa fans who have put their faith in Ferentz and continue to do so are screaming, "Do something!"

Nine months from now, the Hawkeyes will return to the gridiron, once again beginning their upcoming season against Northern Illinois. This might seem like an eternity, but it really isn't. At least it shouldn't be for Ferentz or anyone else in the program that can survive the immediate fallout of a 4-8 season.

"We've got to knock our deficit down, realize there is one, and work on it," Ferentz said.

TRANSCRIPT: [Kirk Ferentz, Nov. 28, 2012 press conference](#) (Courtesy: UI Sports Info.)