

Hawkeyes move on without three players

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Senior wide receiver Blake Haluska, sophomore running back Barkley Hill and redshirt freshman wide receiver A.J. Jones will not be with the Hawkeyes in 2014, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz announced Wednesday.

According to a release issued by the UI, Haluska's career is ending due to a shoulder injury, while Hill and Jones are both transferring to different programs. Jones' decision to transfer [was first reported Wednesday morning by Hawkeye Report's Blair Sanderson](#).

Haluska appeared in three games last season and had been part of the team since 2010 when he first walked on. Hill was forced to redshirt in 2012 following a season-ending knee injury during fall camp and didn't play in 2013.

Kickoff times set for three 2014 games

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Iowa's first three Big Ten games of the 2014 season will all start at 11 a.m. Central, the Big Ten announced Tuesday.

All three games are Homecomings, including Iowa's Homecoming contest against Indiana on Oct. 11 at Kinnick Stadium. The Hawkeyes are the Homecoming opponent this season for Purdue and Maryland.

The Big Ten opener against the Boilermakers on Sept. 27 marks Iowa's third trip to Ross-Ade Stadium in four seasons, while the Hawkeyes will be facing the Terrapins for the first time on Oct. 18 at Byrd Stadium in College Park. Iowa's last contest against the Hoosiers came during the 2012 season. Indiana and Maryland are the Hawkeyes' only opponents this season from the new Big Ten East Division.

No TV stations have been designated yet for any of these three games. More kickoff times are expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

Hawkeyes with three selected in 2014 NFL Draft

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

On the third and final day of the 2014 NFL Draft, Iowa's draft class increased by one.

[After tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz and linebacker Christian Kirksey were both taken in the third round on Friday,](#) linebacker Anthony Hitchens was picked in the fourth round Saturday when the Dallas Cowboys used the 119th overall selection on him. Hitchens is the first Iowa player drafted by the Cowboys since 1984, when Dallas drafted both running back

Norm Granger and offensive guard Joe Levelis.

During an interview with the Cowboys' radio network, Hitchens said he was surprised the Cowboys drafted him because his only encounter with them during the process came at the NFL Combine last February. He also said how his agent told him he would "probably" be a sixth-round pick.

"It was a just a sit-down meeting," Hitchens said about his interactions with Dallas. "One of the scouts drew up their defense. I just had to draw Xs and Os for them and then give them a little bio about myself and my background, things like that."

Hitchens received the phone call from Cowboys owner Jerry Jones and also got a chance to speak with head coach Jason Garrett, defensive coordinator Rod Marinelli and linebackers coach Matt Eberflus. When asked about what attracted Dallas to Hitchens, Eberflus made mention of the things that stood out on game tape.

"If you turn on the tape, the first thing you'll see is striking ability," Eberflus said during an interview with the Cowboys' radio network. "He has a really good ability to time his blows when he's going to strike a runner. He knocks people back, has turn-around tackles, and that's something that we need on this defense."

Eberflus also went on to rave about Hitchens' field instincts and said that which linebacker spot he plays at hasn't been determined yet. Hitchens played weak-side linebacker at Iowa, but the Cowboys think he can play at either MIKE or strong-side if need be. They also have high expectations for Hitchens on special teams, as Eberflus said he could be a "core" special teams player from Day One.

2014 NFL DRAFT:

Round 3 (65th overall) – C.J. Fiedorowicz, TE, Houston Texans

Round 3 (71st overall) – Christian Kirksey, LB, Cleveland Browns

Round 4 (119th overall) – Anthony Hitchens, LB, Dallas Cowboys

UNDRAFTED FREE AGENTS:

James Morris, LB, [New England Patriots](#)

Brett Van Sloten, OT, [Baltimore Ravens](#)

Casey Kreiter, LS, [Dallas Cowboys](#)

Tanner Miller, FS, [Green Bay Packers](#)

Conor Boffeli, OG, [Minnesota Vikings](#)

Hitchens drafted by Cowboys

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Former Iowa linebacker Anthony Hitchens was selected in the fourth round of the 2014 NFL Draft, as the Dallas Cowboys took him with the 119th overall pick. Hitchens is the second Hawkeye linebacker to be picked in this year's draft, following third-round pick Christian Kirksey.

As a senior last season, Hitchens recorded 112 tackles, including 13.5 tackles for a loss of yardage. He also recorded two sacks, two forced fumbles and an interception. For his career, Hitchens compiled 270 tackles over his Hawkeye career.

Last season, the Cowboys went 8-8. Dallas scouted Iowa's game at Iowa State last season, a game where Hitchens recorded 10

tackles, including six unassisted.

***Be sure to visit *HawkeyeDrive.com* later this evening for a full recap of Saturday's NFL Draft action.**

Pair of Hawkeyes go in third round

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

After Iowa had only one player drafted last year, a pair of Hawkeyes taken Friday during the third round of the 2014 NFL Draft.

It started with the very first pick of the third round (65th overall) when the Houston Texans drafted former tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz, who became the first Iowa player to ever be taken by the Texans and the eighth Iowa tight end under Kirk Ferentz to get drafted.

"I've watched the Texans over the past couple of years and I've seen them use their tight ends," Fiedorowicz said during a conference call with Houston media. "It's a big part of their offense. I feel like I can continue that and keep things rolling at the tight end position."

Fiedorowicz said he had discussions at both the Senior Bowl and Combine with the Texans and that he went through a workout at Iowa's football complex for head coach Bill O'Brien, who coached Penn State when the Hawkeyes played the Nittany Lions during Fiedorowicz's junior season in 2012.

"We put him through various drills, really similar drills to what we do with all those type of tight ends. We see him as a Y-tight end," O'Brien said of his new 6-5, 265-pound tight end during a press conference Friday night with Houston media. "He had a good day that day. He was a really good guy to talk to. You could tell he was a team guy. I think anybody who plays for Kirk Ferentz has to be a team guy. He runs that type of program.

"In the meeting room there, he could explain what they were doing at Iowa when we watched film with him and then obviously when we watched tape of him last year, we saw a guy that got better and better as the year went on."

Six picks later, the Cleveland Browns used the 71st overall selection on former linebacker Christian Kirksey, who was the first Hawkeye linebacker drafted since both Pat Angerer and A.J. Edds heard their names called in 2010. Kirksey is also the first Iowa player drafted by Cleveland since its current version of the Browns returned to the NFL in 1999.

"It was mind-blowing," Kirksey said during a conference call with Cleveland media. "I've been playing this game since I was 7 years old. Just to see my name go across the screen and know that I'm going to be an NFL player, I'm just fired up. I'm ready to get down to Cleveland right now and just be a part of that family, be a part of that atmosphere."

Kirksey, who was primarily used as a LEO linebacker during the three seasons he started for the Hawkeyes, said the Browns coaching staff envisions him as an inside linebacker in their scheme. Mike Pettine is entering his first season as Cleveland's head coach after serving as Buffalo's defensive coordinator last year and then before that as the New York Jets' defensive coordinator for four seasons under Rex Ryan. He said Kirksey having "position flexibility" is what piqued his interest in him the most.

“We’ve always been one in our system to cherish a player that can play multiple spots,” Pettine said during a press conference Friday night with Cleveland media. “He can play the MIKE, he can play the WILL, he can play outside on the edge if he had to.

He has some strong safety-type attributes, which I think with today’s linebackers, you’re looking for given the athletic tight ends and the spread formations you’re getting.”

The 2014 NFL Draft concludes Saturday with Rounds 4-7. Among the Iowa players still waiting to hear if their names get called include linebackers James Morris and Anthony Hitchens and offensive linemen Conor Boffeli and Brett Van Sloten.

****Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com following the draft Saturday for further coverage of any additional Iowa players getting selected.***

Kirksey picked by Browns

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Former Iowa linebacker Christian Kirksey was selected in the third round of the 2014 NFL Draft, as the Cleveland Browns took him with the 71st overall pick. Kirksey is the first Hawkeye linebacker to get drafted since 2010 when both Pat Angerer and A.J. Edds were both picked by the Indianapolis Colts and Miami Dolphins, respectively. He is also the second Hawkeye taken in the third round this year as former tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz went six picks earlier to Houston.

As a senior last season, Kirksey recorded 104 tackles, 2.5

sacks, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries, plus an interception. For his career, Kirksey finished with 315 tackles, 5.5 sacks, four interceptions and seven fumble recoveries.

Last season, the Browns went 4-12. Cleveland scouted three Iowa games in 2013 – at Minnesota, at Ohio State and vs. Wisconsin. Against the Golden Gophers, Kirksey had an interception and he recorded 11 tackles against the Badgers.

***Be sure to visit *HawkeyeDrive.com* throughout the weekend as more Hawkeye players continue to get picked in the 2014 NFL Draft.**

Fiedorowicz taken by Texans

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Former Iowa tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz was selected in the third round of the 2014 NFL Draft, as the Houston Texans took him with the 65th overall pick. Fiedorowicz is the first Hawkeye tight end to be drafted since 2010 when the Kansas City Chiefs drafted Tony Moeaki and is the eighth tight end from Iowa to be taken in the NFL Draft since Kirk Ferentz became head coach back in 1999.

As a senior last season, Fiedorowicz hauled in 30 catches for 299 yards receiving and six of his 10 career touchdowns. He finished his Hawkeye career with 91 catches for 899 yards receiving.

Last season, the Texans went 2-14. Houston had scouts in attendance for one of Iowa's games in 2013, when the Hawkeyes

played then-No. 4 Ohio State at Ohio Stadium. Fiedorowicz had four catches for 29 yards receiving and grabbed a two-yard touchdown reception on Iowa's opening drive in that game.

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2014 NFL Draft: Teams that could take Hawkeyes (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Whenever I cover an Iowa football game, I always go through a structured protocol from the moment I arrive at the stadium to the moment I leave. I usually make an effort to arrive approximately two-and-a-half hours before kickoff.

The first thing I do after going through security and arriving in the press box and find the seating chart, where I look for two things. One, of course, is where my seat is. The other thing I do with the seating chart is tally two lists – one of which bowl games have representatives on hand, the other list consists of NFL teams listed as having scouts in attendance.

The reason for that second list is this – Iowa (and most of its opponents) are going to have players drafted every year. While scouting games isn't a be-all, end-all for these NFL teams and their employees, knowing who was on hand each week during the fall can be a helpful tool now as the NFL Draft begins Thursday.

This year, Iowa is looking at two players for sure (possibly three) being drafted by NFL teams this weekend. The two sure bets are tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz and linebacker Christian Kirksey, while the one maybe is linebacker James Morris. Fiedorowicz will most likely be the first Hawkeye off the board, with most mock drafts projecting him somewhere in the third round. Kirksey's projection isn't as uniform with various mock drafts, but the majority of them have Kirksey projected somewhere in the middle (fourth-fifth rounds), which means he would be picked on the third and final day of the draft. The mock drafts that do include Morris have him taken in either the sixth or seventh rounds.

With this in mind and with three seasons of data compiled by *HawkeyeDrive.com* that includes which teams were in attendance to scout Iowa's games between 2011-2013, I figured I'd make educated guesses here on which teams I can see looking at drafting these three players. These guesses are based off the following – which teams scouted what were some of these guys' best games statistically over the past three seasons.

C.J. Fiedorowicz:

I looked at 12 games over the past three seasons where Fiedorowicz would have been viewed as a bright spot for Iowa. Six of these 12 games came last season, while two of them were in 2011 and four in 2012. From this list of 12 games, 21 NFL teams were listed as having scouts in attendance. There are eight teams to appear more than once and all eight of those teams scouted at least one game last season where Fiedorowicz played well.

The eight teams appearing multiple times are as follows: Baltimore, Carolina, Jacksonville, Kansas City, N.Y. Giants, N.Y. Jets, Tampa Bay and Tennessee. The Jets and Titans were on hand in 2011 when Fiedorowicz caught his first career touchdown pass against Michigan State and the Titans and Panthers were among the teams scouting the 2014 Outback Bowl

against LSU. Carolina was also on hand at Michigan Stadium in 2012 when Fiedorowicz caught eight passes for 99 yards receiving against Michigan.

Three of these eight teams came up thrice and should be the ones to watch most closely as it pertains to Fiedorowicz – Baltimore, Kansas City and the N.Y. Giants.

In 2012, Iowa played a pair of home games against Iowa State and Penn State. The Giants were at Kinnick Stadium for both of these, while the Ravens were in attendance for Iowa State and the Chiefs for Penn State. In 2013, the Giants (along with the Jaguars) witnessed Fiedorowicz catch a game-winning touchdown pass in overtime against Northwestern.

Both the Ravens and Chiefs were among the teams at Ohio Stadium when Iowa played Ohio State, the game where the Hawkeyes began to heavily use its “13” personnel. Kansas City was also at Kinnick when Iowa played Michigan State and Baltimore was in town for Fiedorowicz’s final home game against Michigan.

Depending on what these three teams do in the first two rounds, all three will likely have Fiedorowicz on their draft board and could look at him if he’s still there in the third round when they pick. Because of the heavy use of “13” personnel from the Ohio State game on, the team I’m watching here is Baltimore. The Ravens have Dennis Pitta and brought in Owen Daniels during free agency. Daniels isn’t a long-term option however and it’s also worth noting their general manager, Ozzie Newsome, is a Hall of Fame tight end.

He might not be an immediate contributor in Baltimore, but the Ravens are a team I can see finding a way to utilize Fiedorowicz early on and allow him to grow into a bigger role over time. Not to mention he would give Joe Flacco a much-needed red zone target. Baltimore also has two third round picks (one of which is a compensatory selection, meaning the

Ravens can't trade it), so if a tight end isn't taken beforehand, one of those could be Fiedorowicz.

Looking at the third round selection order, the Giants pick 74th overall. That's the earliest I see Fiedorowicz getting picked. If he falls out of the third round altogether, they would also be in a position to take him early fourth. Baltimore has two third-round picks, one of which is a compensatory selection at the end of the third round that can't be traded. Kansas City's third round pick is in-between the two Raven picks.

Christian Kirksey:

I looked at 16 games from the past three seasons where Kirksey played an integral part in whatever success Iowa had defensively. Even though he was a 3-year starter, Kirksey made his biggest jump last year as a senior as eight of those 16 games came from 2013. From these 16 games, 24 NFL teams appear as having scouts in attendance and 14 of them were listed more than once.

Three teams – Chicago, New Orleans and Tennessee – appear twice each with the 2013 Outback Bowl against LSU being one of the two games scouted. The Bears also scouted Iowa's game at Iowa State last season while the Titans were one of seven teams in attendance when Iowa played at Minnesota last September. The only team on this list not to scout any of Iowa's games last season is Green Bay.

Taking this one step further, seven teams appeared on this 16-game list three or more times. Those teams are as follows: Buffalo, Cleveland, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Minnesota, N.Y. Giants and Tampa Bay. In fact, the Jaguars and Chiefs both made four appearances on this list, the most of any NFL teams. However, the only game from last season where Kansas City came up was Iowa's game at Ohio State. The Chiefs scouted two games in 2011 and one in 2012.

As for Jacksonville, it scouted two games in 2012 – vs. Penn State, at Northwestern – and two in 2013 – vs. Northwestern, at Purdue. The data would suggest the Jaguars having the strongest interest in Kirksey and considering how there's stability right now with both the coaching staff and front office, Jacksonville's a team that probably still has Kirksey on its board as it pertains to players expected to be there in the middle rounds.

There are two teams from the 3-appearance list to also keep an eye on though, even with both teams going through coaching and front office turnover this winter. One is the Browns, who are the only team from this short list to scout Iowa three times during 2013 alone. Cleveland was on hand for the Hawkeyes' games against Minnesota, Ohio State and Wisconsin. The other team is one where Kirksey might end up being a really good fit, Tampa Bay.

The Buccaneers also scouted the Minnesota game last season. They are also the only team that scouted either of Iowa's games at Nebraska in both 2011 and 2013. If you recall, the 2013 contest against the Cornhuskers is the one that earned Kirksey the weekly Walter Camp Player of the Week honor. The other notable thing from that game is Kirksey is the one who snuffed out Nebraska's fake punt in the third quarter, which would suggest he can be an immediate special teams contributor with whoever drafts him.

One other factor regarding the Buccaneers is that they already have a former Hawkeye who like Kirksey is from the St. Louis area – Adrian Clayborn. Kirksey burned his redshirt playing special teams in 2010 when Clayborn was the anchor of Iowa's defense, so if Tampa Bay still has interest in Kirksey, it has a resource in Clayborn that could prove to be a resource for Kirksey should he end up there.

Of these three teams (the Jaguars, Browns and Buccaneers), Jacksonville's in the best position to select Kirksey in that

fourth-fifth round range. In the fourth and fifth rounds, the Jaguars currently have five draft picks. The Browns have two fourth-round picks. Tampa Bay doesn't have any fourth round picks right now, but would be the first of these teams to pick in the fifth round should Kirksey fall that far.

James Morris:

Now because there's more uncertainty as to whether or not Morris actually gets drafted, deciphering teams here is more challenging because later round picks aren't being brought in to become immediate contributors. That said, there is some interesting data to consider.

I looked at 17 games between 2011-13 where Morris played a major role for the Hawkeyes and just like with Kirksey, eight of these games are from last season. Also like Kirksey, 24 teams appear on this list with Morris. Of the 24 teams listed, 16 of them came up more than once and all of them scouted Iowa at least once in 2013. Three teams in the 2013 games only category are the Bears, Titans and Vikings and as mentioned earlier, Chicago and Tennessee both scouted the Outback Bowl against LSU.

From the teams listed twice, the one that stands out most is San Francisco and here's why. The two Iowa games on this list the 49ers were in attendance for both were against Iowa State – 2012 at Kinnick, 2013 at Jack Trice Stadium in Ames. Considering how the 49ers' biggest obstacle right now is a team inside their own division and also enter the draft with 11 picks, it wouldn't surprise me at all if one of those late round picks ended up being Morris.

Morris was named Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week twice in 2013 following games against Minnesota and Northwestern. Between those two games, nine different NFL teams were scouting, but none of them scouted both games.

Shortening the list further, five teams appear three times

each – Baltimore, Buffalo, Kansas City, N.Y. Giants and Tampa Bay. The Bills and Buccaneers were among the teams at Minnesota last September, while the Giants scouted the Northwestern game from last season. Buffalo also scouted Iowa's game against Wisconsin, where Morris had an interception on the Badgers' opening possession. Tampa Bay also scouted the Nebraska game, which was arguably the best game Iowa's linebacker trio played as a collective unit during this 3-year span.

Then there's the Cleveland Browns, who came up on this list five times. Cleveland scouted two games in 2011, one of which was Iowa's season opener against Tennessee Tech, a game where Morris had a 49-yard interception return. The Browns also scouted the Minnesota game from this past season where Morris earned Big Ten accolades, as well as Iowa's game at Ohio State and at home against Wisconsin.

But there's another interesting dynamic with the Browns. Cleveland's new head coach is Mike Pettine, who was the defensive coordinator for the Bills last season. Both Buffalo and Cleveland scouted the Minnesota and Wisconsin games last season, so whatever information the Browns had gathered before about Morris is probably similar to whatever the Bills have, if not more thorough.

Cleveland has the most information and has seen Morris play at his best more than any other NFL team. San Francisco has three seventh round picks at its disposal and the experience of scouting games where Morris excelled against a big rival, not to mention stability (for now) in both the coaching staff and front office. My gut feeling is Morris ends up being picked by one of these two teams.

2014 Leadership Group announced

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz announced his Leadership Group for the 2014 season on Monday, which consists of 12 players.

This year's group consists of five seniors, three juniors, two sophomores and two redshirt freshmen. Seniors Mark Weisman (running back) and Brandon Scherff (offensive tackle) return from the 2013 group and are joined in their class by linebacker Quinton Alston and defensive tackles Carl Davis and Louis Trinca-Pasat.

The trio of juniors features center Austin Blythe, free safety Jordan Lomax and quarterback Jake Rudock, all of whom were members of last year's Leadership Group. Both sophomores are also returnees in quarterback C.J. Beathard and offensive tackle Ryan Ward. The two newest members from the redshirt freshmen class are linebacker Josey Jewell and offensive guard Sean Welsh.

4/26/2014: Iowa spring game video

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – The Iowa Hawkeyes conducted their spring football game at Kinnick Stadium on Saturday, signifying the end of their 15-practice spring football period that started in late March.

Below are six videos from the first half of Iowa's spring game on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium, plus video of Kirk Ferentz's press conference afterwards. The first five videos are all from the first quarter, while the sixth video is from the second quarter. Four of the videos (1, 3, 5, 6) feature the No. 1 offense vs. the No. 1 defense, while the second and fourth videos feature the second-string units.

VIDEO #1: 1s vs. 1s; First Quarter

VIDEO #2: 2s vs. 2s; First Quarter

VIDEO #3: 1s vs. 1s; First Quarter

VIDEO #4: 2s vs. 2s; First Quarter

VIDEO #5: 1s vs. 1s; First Quarter

VIDEO #6: 1s vs. 1s; Second Quarter

Ferentz Press Conference: