9/28/2012: I-Club breakfast video

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa — As he does every Friday morning before a home football game, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz spoke at the Johnson County I-Club Breakfast inside the Sheraton Hotel. This week, he discussed the Hawkeyes' upcoming game against Minnesota.

Ferentz was introduced by former Iowa quarterback/running back and current Hawkeye Radio Network color commentator Ed Podolak.

Below are videos of both Podolak's and Ferentz's speeches:

Iowa vs. Minnesota (What to expect)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

To get you all ready for Saturday's game between Iowa and Minnesota, I put together a list of things you ought to know before heading to Kinnick Stadium.

At the end, I'll provide what I think are three keys to an

Iowa victory.

Iowa Hawkeyes (2-2) vs. Minnesota Golden Gophers (4-0)

Kinnick Stadium; Iowa City, Iowa

Sept. 29, 2012

11 a.m. Central

TV: ESPN2 (Beth Mowins, Joey Galloway, Lewis Johnson)

Radio: Hawkeye Radio Network (Gary Dolphin, Ed Podolak, Rob Brooks)

Weather: 69 degrees; partly cloudy early/sun throughout; wind from WNW

Brendan's Three Keys to the Game:

1. Better special teams play

Given the onside kicks Minnesota has executed in each of the past two meetings, as well as the onside kick Iowa gave up to Central Michigan last week, and this is fairly obvious. But looking beyond the obvious here, special teams will likely be the difference again Saturday. Keep in mind that one of the Golden Gophers' biggest areas of concern right now is their field-goal kicking, while conversely, Mike Meyer has been a strength for the Hawkeyes this season and proved his worth with the 46-yarder he made against the wind in the fourth quarter of last week's game. If it comes down to a gamewinning kick, Iowa could be holding a distinct advantage.

2. Continued red zone success

Both teams are going to be running the football. A lot. To me, this means points are going to be coming at a premium on Saturday. Think back to last year's game in Minneapolis, and one of the biggest reasons Iowa lost that day was because the Hawkeyes came up empty on three different occasions in the red

zone (and this was before the Minnesota comeback began to take place). Iowa has done well in recent weeks of turning red zone trips into touchdowns and I think the Hawkeyes will have numerous trips in the red zone again in this game, meaning they have to be able to make the most of those opportunities if Floyd of Rosedale is going to be stay in Iowa City beyond Saturday afternoon.

3. Force Shortell out of the pocket

Make no mistake — Max Shortell is a different style quarterback from MarQueis Gray, who won't be playing for Minnesota on Saturday due to an ankle injury. Shortell's at his best when he's able to stay in the pocket and look downfield, which is something opposing quarterbacks have been able to do against Iowa's defense each of the last three weeks. If the Hawkeyes are going to rise to the occasion defensively Saturday afternoon, they have to be able to make Shortell move around and not let him be able to set his feet, otherwise he's going to carve them apart. Force him to scramble and think on the fly, and Iowa might be able to force a couple of Gopher turnovers and win the bulk of the field position battles.

9/27/2012: Talkin' Hawks podcast (Iowa vs. Minnesota)

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 preview Iowa's Big Ten opener on Sept. 29 against the Minnesota Golden Gophers at Kinnick Stadium, which is also the Hawkeyes' Homecoming game. 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.

Joining as a guest this week in the podcast's middle segment is Matt Humbert, who writes about Minnesota for his site, <u>Fringe Bowl Team Blog (FBT)</u>. This week's edition is approximately 70-75 minutes long, so enjoy:

<u>Talkin' Hawks podcast (Iowa vs. Minnesota)</u>

Twitter handles:

HawkeyeDrive.com — 0HawkeyeDrive

Brendan Stiles - <u>@thebstiles</u>

Chris Rowell - @Crowell34

Matt Humbert — @MVofDT

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

9/25/2012: Iowa football

notebook



Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game against Minnesota during his weekly press conference held Tuesday, Sept. 25, 2012, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Frustration. Disappointment. Anger. Any of these words would adequately describe the mood of this Iowa football program as it opens Big Ten play Sept. 29 with its Homecoming game against Minnesota.

As the Hawkeyes shift their attention towards reclaiming Floyd of Rosedale for the first time in three seasons, it was painfully obvious the challenge of coming off a loss like the 32-31 defeat Iowa endured to Central Michigan last weekend has been more of a challenge than normal. After taking a 31-23 lead with just over two minutes left, the Chippewas scored nine unanswered points to pull off the come-from-behind stunner.

"It definitely took more than a day for me. I'm not sure about

anybody else," junior linebacker Anthony Hitchens said.

The Hawkeyes' most recent defeat has led to a wide array of criticism from fans, some of which has been directed at players but for the most part has been aimed at head coach Kirk Ferentz. The players who have gotten criticism know it's out there and attempt efforts at ignoring it completely.

Then there's the criticism aimed at their coach, which is something senior center James Ferentz has grown accustomed to seeing whenever losses have mounted.

"We've kind of seen it all through these 13 years," James said, referring to how many full seasons his father has been the head coach. "We've been in the highs and we've been in the lows. Right now, we're living week-to-week and our goal right now is to beat Minnesota."

Similar angst has been on display before and to Iowa's credit, there have been recent instances where it has been able to overcome head-scratching losses one week and win a critical game the following week as it will need to do here. The most recent example would be last season where the Hawkeyes' followed up a stinker against Minnesota by beating then-No. 13 Michigan at home the very next week.

"You have to get on your feet," Kirk Ferentz said. "Somehow, some way, you have to learn from what happened and sometimes in real life, there aren't things to learn. It's just life. But in football, there's certainly things to learn and we had a lot to discuss on Sunday. But once that's over, you got to move on."

The onside kick and how it all broke down

For all the personal foul penalties, failed third-down attempts and other Hawkeye blunders that probably played a bigger role in losing to Central Michigan, the one play getting the most discussion Tuesday was the onside kick

recovered by the Chippewas inside of a minute left showing on the clock.

Ferentz made the following comment in his postgame press conference: "Typically, some guys are assigned to go block the guys that are pursuing and other guys are assigned to catch. We looked very confused out there and that's not a good thing. Very indecisive."

On Tuesday, he elaborated a bit more on how he goes about putting together blockers and receivers for his hands team. He said the front line consists of "blockers," which would primarily feature tight ends and linebackers that could block but also have the ability to put their hands on the ball if need be. He added that one defensive lineman — redshirt freshman Darian Cooper — has been used and was used last weekend as one of the blockers.

The rest of the hands team, the "receivers," would mainly consist of wideouts, defensive backs and anyone else with ball skills.

Ferentz then said there's "gray area" with whether the blockers should be allowed to touch the football if it comes their way. In this particular instance, there were players lined up who moved away from the ball with the mindset of one of the "return" players on the hands team being able to run up and get the recovery.

"The coaches coach, 'If the ball's coming, screaming at them, let it go and let the guys in the back handle it,' because obviously it will slow down by then. But if it's able to be filled, like it's a slow dribbler, then take it. It's their call," senior wide receiver Keenan Davis said. "It was just unfortunate we didn't get it."

Speaking of onside kicks...

It only seems appropriate that onside kicks were such a heavy

topic Tuesday. In winning each of its past two meetings with the Hawkeyes during both the 2010 and 2011 seasons, Minnesota on both occasions caught Iowa off guard attempting onside kicks that the Golden Gophers would recover and turn into touchdowns.

Two years ago, it came in the first quarter after Minnesota took a 3-0 on its opening drive. The Golden Gophers recovered the onside kick attempt and got a touchdown run from quarterback MarQueis Gray to make it 10-0 before the Hawkeye offense even ran a play from scrimmage.

Then came last year's game, which was also played at TCF Bank Stadium in Minneapolis. In a sort of similar fashion to what occurred against Central Michigan last weekend, Minnesota trailed 21-10 in the fourth quarter and after scoring a touchdown to make it a five-point game (it missed the 2-point conversion try), the Golden Gophers recovered an onside kick no one on Iowa was prepared for and Gray once again scored what proved to be the game-winning touchdown for Minnesota.

It should be noted that both Gopher onside kicks were designed to catch Iowa off guard as opposed to the Chippewa onside kick last weekend that came at a juncture where Central Michigan had to onside kick the ball in order to have any shot of winning.

"You definitely have got to see the ball off the tee," senior cornerback Micah Hyde said. "I think you see that a lot in college football now, even in the pros. You see that front line wants to get back and block and then they just tap it 10 yards and everybody runs to get it. You definitely have to have that in the back of your mind."

Davis said the Hawkeyes usually spend their Thursday practice preparing for onside kick situations and that an even bigger emphasis would be placed on it them this week given Minnesota's recent history of using them. "We're definitely going to be ready for that," Davis said. "[The coaches] are going to preach that and every year, we have."

There's the onside kicks, and then there's coming off two straight losses to a team that, at least on paper, was inferior on both occasions. James Ferentz offered up the following explanation for the Hawkeyes' recent woes with their border rival:

"If you go back and look at the past two years, Minnesota has been the more excited team to play," James said. "They come out, they're hitting harder. Offensively, they're executing crisper than we were.

"They've been the more excited team, and again, that falls on us as players. We need to change the mentality around here and we need to come out Saturday and be the more excited team.

Closer look at Minnesota

If there is a bit of good news for the Hawkeyes, it's that Gray, the guy who accounted for both of those touchdowns following onside kicks the past two seasons, won't be able to play for Minnesota this week as he continues to recover from an injury suffered in the Golden Gophers' 28-23 win over Western Michigan on Sept. 15.

Enter Max Shortell. The sophomore made his third career start at quarterback for Minnesota last weekend in its 17-10 victory over Syracuse and is getting the nod again versus Iowa. Against the Orange, he completed 16-of-30 passes and had 231 yards through the air.

Unlike Gray, who is known to be more of a dual threat that can break to the outside like he did on his winning touchdown run against Iowa last year, Shortell is more in the mold of the pocket passing-type of quarterback the Hawkeyes have faced in recent weeks. Even with the different dynamic Minnesota

presents behind center, Iowa's plan defensively isn't too different than it would be if Gray was playing.

"They're obviously going to come out and try to run the ball first like they always do, so we've got to stop the run first and foremost," senior defensive end Joe Gaglione said. "Then they do a lot of play-action, so we're just going to be able to get a good rush and then go from there."

But perhaps the bigger story with Minnesota entering this contest is its turnaround defensively. Last season, the Golden Gophers had one of the worst defenses in the entire Big Ten. In fact, they beat the Hawkeyes last October despite surrendering 252 yards on the ground to then-Iowa running back Marcus Coker, who has since transferred to Stony Brook.

This season, Minnesota's defense has been an instrumental part of its 4-0 start. Its seven interceptions and plus-5 turnover margin both lead the Big Ten alongside Ohio State. The Golden Gophers also possess defensive lineman D.L. Wilhite, who comes in leading the conference with 4.5 sacks.

"He's a hard-nosed football player," sophomore left tackle Brandon Scherff said of Wilhite. "We've just got to block him and go take care of business."

First ever September bout with Gophers

Prior to last season's October meeting in Minneapolis, the Iowa-Minnesota rivalry had been played annually during the month of November from 1984-2010. Saturday's game at Kinnick Stadium marks the first time ever the Hawkeyes and Golden Gophers have ever played each other during the month of September.

This is also Iowa's first Homecoming game against Minnesota since 1979, which was Hayden Fry's first season as the Hawkeyes' head coach.

9/25/2012: Iowa player audio with photos (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

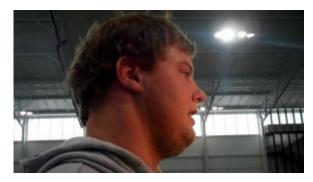
IOWA CITY, Iowa — On Tuesday, 12 members of the Iowa football team spoke with the media to discuss the Hawkeyes' upcoming game on Sept. 29 against Minnesota.

Below is audio from each of the following players — sophomore wide receiver Kevonte Martin-Manley, senior left guard Matt Tobin, sophomore left tackle Brandon Scherff, senior quarterback James Vandenberg, senior center James Ferentz, junior linebacker Anthony Hitchens, junior fullback Brad Rogers, junior wide receiver Jordan Cotton, junior defensive end Dominic Alvis, senior wide receiver Keenan Davis, senior cornerback Micah Hyde and senior defensive end Joe Gaglione:



Kevonte Martin-Manley, Sept.
25, 2012

<u>Kevonte Martin-Manley, sophomore wide receiver</u>



Matt Tobin, Sept. 25, 2012

Matt Tobin, senior left guard



Brandon Scherff, Sept. 25, 2012

Brandon Scherff, sophomore left tackle



James Vandenberg, Sept. 25, 2012

<u>James Vandenberg</u>, <u>senior quarterback</u>



James Ferentz, Sept. 25, 2012

<u>James Ferentz, senior center</u>



Anthony Hitchens, Sept. 25, 2012

Anthony Hitchens, junior linebacker



Brad Rogers, Sept. 25, 2012

Brad Rogers, junior fullback



Jordan Cotton, Sept. 25, 2012

<u>Jordan Cotton, junior wide receiver</u>



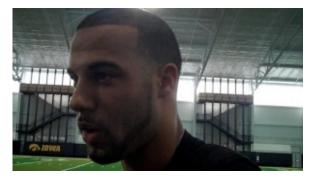
Dominic Alvis, Sept. 25, 2012

Dominic Alvis, junior defensive end



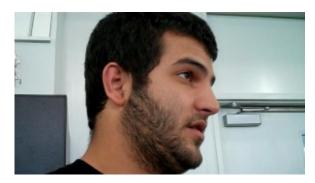
Keenan Davis, Sept. 25, 2012

Keenan Davis, senior wide receiver



Micah Hyde, Sept. 25, 2012

Micah Hyde, senior cornerback



Joe Gaglione, Sept. 25, 2012

Joe Gaglione, senior defensive end

9/25/2012: Kirk Ferentz press conference transcript

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Below is a PDF from the Iowa sports information department featuring the complete transcript from Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz's press conference on Tuesday in Iowa City:

Coach Ferentz - 09 25 12

9/25/2012: Kirk Ferentz teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz's teleconference on Tuesday with the Big Ten media:

Ferentz's opening statement:

"We obviously had a disappointing outcome on Saturday. Central [Michigan] outplayed us and deserved to win. Credit goes to them. It's disappointing. We worked on that Sunday and then turned our sights to Minnesota this week and certainly, we've got a great challenge on our hands. They're playing very well and come in undefeated, so it's exciting to get into the Big Ten, certainly, and we've got a real challenge in front of us."

On whether the dynamic of the Iowa/Minnesota rivalry has changed given Minnesota's recent success:

"Well, you know, it has always been a rival. I got here in '81 and it was a rival, playing for Floyd of Rosedale. So there was some added incentive, if you will, there. But it has always been a great series and certainly, I think anytime there's a change in staffs, it changes things a little bit. Coach [Jerry] Kill has done a wonderful job up there in a very short amount of time.

"The bottom line is they're not 4-0 by some fluke or anything

like that. They've outplayed four teams and earned four victories. The reason is because they're playing really well. They're playing disciplined football. They play together and play with a lot of energy and enthusiasm."

On what stands out to him about Minnesota's success this season getting off to a 4-0 start:

"Well, I think it's like anything. You know, the first year, a lot of people are feeling their way around, I think. At least typically, that's what happens. I think right now, if you watch the film, they're playing more confident. I think they probably have a much better understanding of — I'm talking about the players — what they're being asked to do. Ultimately, they're just playing with a lot of confidence. They're playing fast. They've had some success and that tends to bring more success."

On whether using the tight ends more will be part of Iowa's game plan:

"It has always been part of our game plan. It's just a matter of how things develop out on the field. But most of our pass patterns, we don't keep our tight ends in a lot, in protection. At times, we do. But they get out an awful lot. There's really no way to dictate where the ball's going to go. The defense handles that more so than we do."

On how he would evaluate the play of quarterback James Vandenberg through these first four games:

"I think he has played well. But we haven't played well enough to win in two of them. That's the way it is for James, that's the way it is for all of our players, that's the way it is for our coaching staff."

On how he gets his team to move on from a loss like last weekend to Central Michigan:

"Well, that's the reality of football. Whether you win or lose, you have to move past whatever you do the previous weekend and then focus on two things — focus on what you need to do better internally and then also, you have to focus on your opponent. So week-to-week, it really doesn't change a lot.

"The only difference now is we're moving into conference play, which is significant. But this game is just as important as the last one. We can't really do anything about the last one now, so we have to turn our attention fully to Minnesota and see what we can do to be prepared for that game."

On whether he has seen progress made offensively in the last two games:

"Well, we scored touchdowns, for one thing. We were having a hard time doing that the first two weeks. We scored at the end of our first ball game and then not at all in terms of touchdowns in our second ball game. So we're doing a little bit better job of putting it in the end zone and finishing drives. Needless to say if you're going to be successful offensively, you have to come out with points any time you're down at your opponent's end. If it's all field goals, that catches up to you after awhile. I think we've made improvement there in some regards."

On if there's anything specific he feels he and his staff need to do a better job of:

"Well, yeah. I mean, clearly we weren't prepared well enough last week, so we didn't play well enough as a result. It's really the same objective each and every week and it has been that way for over 13 years now. We come in every week at the start of the week to do our best to prepare the football team to play well, and then you have to go out and play well. Nothing has really changed year-to-year or week-to-week."

On the importance of the UI's commitment to recent facility

upgrades:

"Well, I think it's really important across the board in college football. If you look historically, it's probably not as important maybe in some institutions. Things have probably changed a little bit, but if you go back 10-15 years ago, I think some of the warmer weather destination-type schools didn't have to worry as much about having great facilities because they were selling other things. But you know, a school in the Midwest or a state that isn't real heavily-populated, I think it's extremely important. So that has been our motivation to move forward.

"I mean, the bottom line is if you have a doable practice field, or practice fields, or a doable indoor arena, it really doesn't matter what the price tag is. You should be able to get your preparation done. But when you start thinking about recruiting and things of that nature — pro teams are evidence of what I just mentioned a minute ago — when you factor in recruiting, I think facilities are very, very important. So I think depending on where you're at or what your situation is, it could be a degree of importance. It varies a little bit, but the importance is there."

On if he thinks the average fan realizes the importance of facilities in a recruit's eyes:

"Probably not. It's hard to conceptualize as much when you throw numbers around like you did a minute ago and all of the facilities that are being built. I know Arizona's going through a project, Washington State. You're talking about really big numbers. But I go back 20 years ago, too, and the things that were going on back then were big numbers, too. It's kind of the reality of competitive sports right now."

9/24/2012: State of the Big Ten, Volume 66 (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

Of all the Big Ten results that took place on the gridiron this past weekend, the most puzzling occurred at Kinnick Stadium with the Iowa Hawkeyes blowing an eight-point lead in the final minute to lose 32-31 to Central Michigan. The Chippewas scored a touchdown, missed a two-point conversion that would've tied the game, then recovered an onside kick and nailed a 47-yard field goal with three seconds left to pull off the stunning comeback.

It was stunning in how the events transpired though, not stunning in that Iowa managed to lose a game in that fashion. In fact, it had an eerily similar feel to the Hawkeyes' 22-21 loss to Minnesota last season, one where Iowa was ahead 21-10 before giving up 12 unanswered points to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

The Hawkeyes are currently one of four Big Ten teams sitting at 2-2 right now, and by far, the most surprising of that bunch to be entering Big Ten play with a .500 mark. Michigan lost two games away from the Big House to teams currently ranked in the top 10. Penn State started 0-2 but has since reeled off two straight wins. Illinois did get blasted at home by Louisiana Tech last weekend, but throw in the loss to Arizona State earlier in the month and the Fighting Illini's

2-2 isn't that stunning.

Iowa's 2-2 start is a surprise though, and here's why. The Hawkeyes are about to complete a four-game home-stand Sept. 29 when it opens Big Ten play against Minnesota. Both of Iowa's losses have taken place at Kinnick Stadium, and this most recent defeat at the hands of Central Michigan was one that goes beyond head-scratching if you're a Hawkeye fan. As low as the expectations were in Iowa City entering this season (at least compared to most recent years), this team wasn't expected to be 2-2 at this point and if anyone did expect it, losing to Central Michigan at home probably wasn't a game projected as one of those two losses.

A lot of criticism has come the way of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz and will continue to unless the Hawkeyes make a drastic turnaround in conference play. Even then, people are going to still wonder how this team lost two home games in September, one of which to a MAC team that isn't expected to fare well in that league this season.

Ferentz's seat will start to get warm and more questions are going to come his way, but the reality of the situation is he won't be fired for this season. Anyone who thinks that's even a remote possibility doesn't have a clue. For one thing, he has new coordinators on both sides of the ball, one of which was an emergency hire by the UI after former offensive coordinator Ken O'Keefe left the staff to become the Miami Dolphins' wide receivers coach.

Even more significant however is Ferentz's contract, which was revised after Iowa won the Orange Bowl three seasons ago. Ferentz is under contract up through 2020 and has a buyout north of \$20 million. That's not to say anyone in Iowa City should be satisfied with the results they've received the past two-plus seasons, but that it won't be after this season if Ferentz's tenure ever did come to an abrupt end.

Also understand that since 1979, Iowa has had two head coaches — Ferentz and his predecessor Hayden Fry. Whenever the day comes that Ferentz is no longer coaching, Iowa's not going to be in the position to one, make a bad hire, and two, hire someone that's not going to have the intent of being in Iowa City for the long haul. That's the kind of thing that would set Iowa back to what it was before Fry or Ferentz came along.

It's not so much that the Hawkeyes' season is now on the brink, but more so that their margin of error this season is thinner now than it was last week. A fair assessment of the situation can't really be made until Big Ten games have been played, and that's the case with any Big Ten school, not just Iowa.

With that being said, patience is also starting to wear thin among Hawkeye fans, even those who didn't have the bar set high for 2012. How both Iowa and Ferentz respond this season will be telling going forward.

Iowa vs. Minnesota Game Notes, 2-deep

OFFENSE:

WR 6 Davis, 17 Hillyer/81 Smith

LT 68 Scherff, 78 Donnal

LG 60 Tobin, 58 Simmons

C 53 Ferentz, 59 Bofelli

RG 63 Blythe, 65 Walsh

RT 70 Van Sloten, 76 MacMillan

TE 86 Fiedorowicz, 82 Hamilton

QB 16 Vandenberg, 15 Rudock

WR 11 Martin-Manley, 83 Staggs

RB 45 Weisman, 4 Garmon

FB 38 Rogers, 92 Gimm

DEFENSE:

DE 99 Gaglione, 94 McMinn

DT 54 Bigach, 71 Davis

DT 90 Trinca-Pasat, 97 Cooper

DE 79 Alvis, 49 Spears

OLB 20 Kirksey, 39 Perry

MLB 44 Morris, 52 Alston

WLB 31 Hitchens, 55 Collins

LCB 19 Lowery, 2 Castillo

SS 13 Donatell, 21 Law

FS 5 Miller, 37 Lowdermilk

RCB 18 Hyde, 14 Buford

SPECIAL TEAMS:

P 98 Kornbrath, 14 Wienke

PK 96 Meyer, 1 Koehn

LS 61 Kreiter, 54 Bigach

HOLDER 14 Wienke

PR 18 Hyde

KR 6 Davis, 23 Cotton

<u>Iowa vs. Minnesota Game Notes</u>

2012 Big Ten football TV schedule: Week Five

Every week, we will post the TV schedule for all games featuring Big Ten teams. Here is where and when you can watch them this week:

Sept. 29:

Penn State at Illinois, 11 a.m., ESPN

Minnesota at Iowa, 11 a.m., ESPN2

Indiana at Northwestern, 11 a.m., BTN

Marshall at Purdue, 2:15 p.m., BTN

No. 14 Ohio State at No. 20 Michigan State, 2:30 p.m., ABC

Wisconsin at No. 22 Nebraska, 7 p.m., ABC

*All times listed are Central Standard Time.