

# 4/12/2014: Iowa spring practice video

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

WEST DES MOINES, Iowa – The Iowa Hawkeyes conducted their first of two open spring practices Saturday afternoon and once again opted to showcase themselves for this first open practice at Valley Stadium in front of their fans in the central and western portions of the state.

Below are six videos from the 11-on-11 portion of Sunday's spring practice, plus video of Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz meeting with the media afterwards to discuss the Hawkeyes' progress nine practices into their spring football period. The first video features the first units (both offense and defense) in goal-line situations. The second and third videos are third-down situations with the second video featuring both the first and second units and third video featuring only the first unit. The fourth and sixth videos are the first units during the live portion and the fifth video features the second units during live.

**PRACTICE VIDEO #1 (FIRST OFFENSE VS. FIRST DEFENSE GOAL-LINE):**

**PRACTICE VIDEO #2 (THIRD DOWN SITUATIONS):**

**PRACTICE VIDEO #3 (FIRST OFFENSE VS. FIRST DEFENSE THIRD DOWN):**

**PRACTICE VIDEO #4 (FIRST OFFENSE VS. FIRST DEFENSE LIVE):**

**PRACTICE VIDEO #5 (SECOND OFFENSE VS. SECOND DEFENSE LIVE):**

**PRACTICE VIDEO #6 (FIRST OFFENSE VS. FIRST DEFENSE LIVE):**

**KIRK FERENTZ POST-PRACTICE:**

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# **2014 Spring Football position breakdowns: Tight Ends (premium)**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

Iowa's tight end group was an intriguing bunch in 2013. Five different tight ends managed to see the field at various points last season, which wasn't a surprise given the expectations Kirk Ferentz had for this group. What made them unique though was how they were utilized and in some instances, the specific roles each of them played.

Four of the five have returned in 2014, but the one absence is a significant one in C.J. Fiedorowicz. Even though five tight ends saw the field, there wasn't really much debate about Fiedorowicz being the best of the bunch and it was evident last fall. Whenever the Hawkeye offense reached the end zone, Fiedorowicz was as reliable a target for Jake Rudock as anyone. In the final six games of the regular season, Fiedorowicz had at least one touchdown reception in five of them. The most notable was his game-winning catch in overtime to defeat Northwestern.

As for the four returning, there does appear to be two tiers

at the moment. The first consists of senior Ray Hamilton and junior Jake Duzey. In most of the instances where Iowa utilized 3-tight end sets during the second half of the season, these two were on the field alongside Fiedorowicz.

Hamilton and Duzey are the leaders of this group now, but their roles seem vastly different. Hamilton has been more of a run-blocking tight end throughout his career, a guy that Iowa has never been afraid of using in short-yardage or goal-line situations because it knows he can help create lanes on the edge for whoever is running the ball. Meanwhile, Duzey really came on last fall as a pass-catching threat, most notably when the Hawkeyes played at Ohio State and he caught an 85-yard touchdown pass to tie that game during the third quarter.

This isn't to say Hamilton can't catch or that Duzey can't block. But there will probably be many occurrences in 2014 where (assuming both are healthy) they're on the field at the same time because having both out there could keep defenses guessing. What will be interesting to watch though is when Iowa does get in the red zone, does Hamilton take that role Fiedorowicz played (especially in short-yardage) or does Duzey become the all-around receiving tight end of the bunch.

The second tier consists of junior Henry Kreiger-Coble and sophomore George Kittle. Both have shown glimpses throughout their careers, but Kittle emerged as more of a threat in the passing game last season. His signature play came when the Hawkeyes defeated Iowa State and he was utilized on a play-action that caught the Cyclones completely off guard.

Should Iowa continue making a habit of using 3-tight end sets like it did last season, the intrigue will be which of these two gets that crack as the third guy alongside Duzey and Hamilton. If there's any sort of competition going on with this group, this will be the most heated and the edge will go to whichever tight end of the two proves to be a better blocker.

Collectively, the numbers won't be as strong this year with Fiedorowicz no longer in the picture. But given the amount of depth and experience that is returning, his absence shouldn't be much of a negative impact (if any) and the guys who are back should continue to develop into reliable players for Ferentz to depend on, no matter the situation.

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## 4/9/2014: Iowa spring football notebook



Iowa running backs/special teams coach Chris White discusses the Hawkeyes' running back situation during a press conference held Wednesday, April 9, 2014, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Last season, Iowa divided its carries among

four different running backs – Mark Weisman, Damon Bullock, Jordan Canzeri and LeShun Daniels – and also managed to incorporate a pair of fullbacks in Adam Cox and Macon Plewa, whom the coaches believed all warranted playing time.

Right now, Iowa running backs/specials teams coach Chris White has the luxury of having all six aforementioned players at his disposal for this spring and for the 2014 season. But the question becomes even more prevalent now as to how the carries will get assimilated.

One thing White said he has done this offseason is make cut-ups for all of his backs of every single carry they had in 2013, grading them each individually from their best runs to their worst. From there, he has gone about incorporating new drills.

“I graded everyone, made comments on everyone, and the bottom line was we didn’t finish the runs well enough because we weren’t in a good base,” White said during a press conference on Wednesday. “Our feet were together. We were stopping our feet and we weren’t being able to move.

“So I just created a couple of drills this offseason and it’s really showing up on tape. Mark has made some phenomenal runs, jump cutting, getting up in there. Really looking fluid right now and I really believe it’s because of the drills we’re doing.”

White acknowledged Wednesday that Weisman’s best bet at a professional future in football would be playing fullback. But he also said that because there’s a comfort level with both Cox and Plewa at fullback and because Weisman has the experience at running back, the plan is to keep him in the running back mix.

The same goes for Bullock, who moved around between running back and wide receiver his freshman season before primarily being featured as a running back over the past couple of

years.

“He’s not really built that way,” White said of Bullock. “He’s 205 pounds and he has got a running back body. He’d have a lot of work to do releasing at the line of scrimmage, reading coverage, all the things that go into being a wide receiver. But we realize what he can do and we’re trying to get him isolated out there.”

As for Canzeri, White heaped plenty of praise his way, calling him “instinctually, the best running back” Iowa has when it comes to making cuts and finding a balance. Couple that with the way Canzeri came on late last season with big runs in each of Iowa’s final five games, and there’s reason to think he could play a much bigger role in 2014.

White also described younger running backs such as Akrum Wadley and Jonathan Parker – both of whom redshirted last season – making progress this spring, then spoke highly of the one back from that group who did see the field as a true freshman, LeShun Daniels, calling him, “a special kid.” Daniels is known as a bruising back with his frame, but White went out of his way to praise what the sophomore-to-be has done to become a more complete back this spring.

“He has kind of transformed his body,” White said. “He’s very muscular, but he has really worked on trying to be more flexible in the upper body and lower body and I think it has really helped him out.

“You can see it on the field. He’s explosive, he’s faster and he’s making better cuts.”



Iowa wide receivers coach Bobby Kennedy discusses the Hawkeyes' current crop of receivers during a press conference held Wednesday, April 9, 2014, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City.

### **Kennedy breaks down strengths, areas of improvement for wideouts**

As soon as White finished speaking inside the Hayden Fry Football Complex on Wednesday, Iowa wide receivers coach Bobby Kennedy took to the mic and began describing his group of players, which consists of a blend between proven upperclassmen and a subset of redshirt freshmen all waiting in the wings for their opportunities.

With the experienced group, it starts with the most veteran of Iowa's receivers, senior Kevonte Martin-Manley. When asked about his No. 1 wideout, Kennedy described Martin-Manley as "a relentless worker," someone who leads by example over the course of an entire week, not just Saturdays.

"He's more comfortable," Kennedy said. "I think he's starting to see the game better. There's a bunch of things he needs to improve on. There were some things in the bowl game that he could have done better that would have helped us.

"But I know this – he's willing to put in the work. So hopefully he'll continue to improve."

Looking beyond Martin-Manley, Iowa has a pair of juniors in Tevaun Smith and Jacob Hillyer who showed glimpses of their potential at times last season. Smith had a 54-yard touchdown reception against Michigan, while Hillyer had crucial catches in games against Iowa State and LSU.

When assessing this duo, Kennedy mentioned how he feels a core is being established within the receiving corps as a result of their developments. He added that Smith should view himself as someone playing a bigger role and that Hillyer may not have gotten the recognition he deserved for some of the things he did when he did see the field like making catches that resulted in third-down conversions.

Kennedy was also asked about the speedster among this group of wideouts, senior Damond Powell. Last season, Powell played a very limited role, but played a part in Iowa's 23-7 win over Minnesota when he scampered 73 yards for a touchdown off a tunnel screen.

In his observations about Powell's development, Kennedy mentioned him having a better understanding of the route running in Iowa's system, as well as improving in and out of his cuts. He feels Powell is becoming more comfortable in part because he doesn't have as much to think about now as he upon arrival in Iowa City last August.

"The great thing about him is he's a great guy in our room," Kennedy said. "He has got a great, big personality and the guys respect him. But he also has a really good work ethic."

As for the redshirt freshmen, Kennedy believes they all are showing strides and as a result, a more heated competition to be part of what he said was a six-receiver system is taking place. Three names that he gave brief assessments about Wednesday were Andre Harris, Derrick Mitchell and Derrick Willies.

With Harris, Kennedy said "the sky's the limit," and also





### **Ferentz's opening statement:**

*"We're probably a little bit behind a lot of the teams in the conference. We've only got six workouts done so far, so it has been good to get started, certainly. I'm sure every coach in the conference feels the same way. This is always an interesting time of the year. It's a great teaching period and I always find it interesting and fun to see how all the guys have progressed and how they've come along after the winter program. So we're really into it right now, but it's good to be on the field and just anxious to see what kind of stories might develop here in the next couple of weeks."*

### **On if Scherff fits the mold of someone like Robert Gallery after electing to return for his senior year:**

*"I think it's certainly very positive and you know, we've probably had several guys in that same category. We've had Brandon and Robert, who chose to stay and finish out their careers and then we've also had guys like Bryan Bulaga and Riley Reiff who chose to go to the NFL and I think all four guys were very similar. They chose the guys that did try and choose to come out in the early 20s in the draft. Had Robert and Brandon come out, they probably would have been in that same neighborhood."*

*"But choosing to stay in, to me, that's really powerful for the whole football team and mainly I think the parallel is both guys are very, very good players and both of them have attitudes where they just like the college experience and they're here because they chose to be, they wanted to be. I don't mean that in a negative connotation toward the other two guys. They just felt it was time to go and it worked out really beautifully for both guys. They're both starting in the NFL at the tackle position, so you know, it's just a matter of choice and I think it's up to the individual."*

*"But I guess what I'm trying to articulate is the fact that"*

*when a guy chooses to come back like that, it's usually because he really likes the college experience, he hasn't grown tired of that and he's here for all the right reasons. So the energy and the positive vibes that a current player shares with his teammates, that's just invaluable."*

**On if he ever saw tape of Scherff play quarterback in high school while recruiting him:**

*"I'm only chuckling because I think it was in 10th grade and I read somewhere where he threw for 1,400-1,600 yards in the air. I was going to say I don't doubt that that happened, but I want to see that video. I don't know. But I say that jokingly. Brandon is an outstanding athlete and I don't doubt that was the case, but I've never seen game film though from his sophomore year. I didn't think he could throw a ball 80 yards. I know John Alt, who played here back in the 80s, and I had seen him throw a ball that far. Brandon's a pretty talented athlete."*

**On if he has ever had a lineman make the transition from playing a skill position like quarterback:**

*"Yeah, that's not that uncommon. Usually, it's a tight end, the tight end transition. Guys that are big boned. The thing about Brandon is he was, I don't know, maybe 250 pounds in 10th grade? I'm just guessing. But the thing I remember about him is it seemed like every time we'd see him, we'd see him in training and then you'd see him two months later and he's 10 pounds bigger. He just kind of morphed in front of our eyes it seemed like."*

*"He and Carl Davis are two of the bigger people that we've ever had come here as true freshmen. We don't get a lot of guys that are up there in that 300-pound category. We just have not had that historically. The only other guy I could think of that was real big was Colin Cole, who's still playing with the Panthers right now. Colin came here as a big guy. I*

*think he was 285. So it's more typical for our guys to kind of grow into it, but both Brandon and Carl Davis were both big human beings when they got here."*

**On if he uses the spring more for finding individual performances or for building certain things within the team:**

*"Um, you know, it's a combination. The one thing about spring practice, you have 15 opportunities to go out there and practice and the good news is you don't have a game, not unless you count the spring game and those usually don't go in the record books. So there's not an emphasis. It's not a race to get ready for any one opponent, so it really gives you a chance ... I think it's true teaching, and then along with that, you're always evaluating the team no matter what time of year it is.*

*"But you know, you have so many players at different levels. We just got done talking about Brandon Scherff, who is already a pretty accomplished player. Not that he ... you know, we expect him to get a lot better as a player, but he has played a lot of football and good football for us and we've got guys in that category. Then you've got guys who have never hit the football field. So it's fun just to have an opportunity to really see everybody and really not only see them, but really watch them and evaluate them and track them over the course of 15 practices to see what kind of improvement they make.*

*"So it's a wide range and I think that's what makes it unique and makes it enjoyable. The same thing is going on in the preseason too, but the time to really teach and analyze isn't really the same as what you have right now. This is really a stretched out period and it's just kind of pure football, pure teaching, but you've got a lot of different levels of performance out there. It's kind of interesting to watch it."*

**On what he has seen from his quarterbacks thus far in the spring:**

*“Well I think, you know, they’re doing well. They’re improving. They are improved and they are improving. First of all, [Jake] Rudock is healthy, which I guess must have gotten a lot more play outside of our building than it did in. You know, we were very, very confident. He just needed some time. He was beat up at the end of the year. He’s doing great, so he’s perfectly healthy.”*

*“You know, last year at this time, those guys were competing for a job. Now, both of them have played on the game field and I say both of them being Jake and C.J. [Beathard]. You know, the thing that’s important for them right now is just like every other player on our team, we expect those guys to improve and actually, they should be both smarter and better if they’re using that experience to their advantage.”*

*“We’ve only had six practices, but I think both guys are performing better than they did last spring or better than they were in December and hopefully they’ll continue to do that.”*

**On how the competition between Rudock and Beathard is different now (if it is) from back in 2013:**

*“Well you know, I can’t tell you how many snaps both have played. But you know, obviously, Jake has played a really significant number and C.J. had to come off the bench and he did some really good things for us. We felt all along that what I said last year was 100 percent true, that there’s good competition.”*

*“Jake has more experience right now, but it’s still a situation where both guys have to be at their best and we’re bringing Nic Shimonek along as well, so it’s a different tier. But at the end of the day, it’s a room of good guys and they’re competing well and we tell everybody on the team that every job is open, so it’s a matter of going out on the field and performing.”*

**Scherff's opening statement:**

*"Spring football is going really well. We've got six practices under our belt, so we're just a little under halfway there. We'll be a little bit over halfway there after this week's over, but you know, we've got a long ways to go. With every practice, we've got to take advantage of it and just keep on track."*

**On the goals he set forth for himself with this year after making the decision to return for his senior season:**

*"The reason I came back was to just improve myself in all aspects of football – pass blocking, run blocking, finishing those things well and just playing faster and smarter and hopefully becoming a better leader and just setting goals to be the best leader I can be."*

*"We're trying to be the best offensive line in the Big Ten and my goal is to be one of the best offensive linemen in the nation, so I just got to keep working my butt off and hopefully pulling people along with me and just doing what I can do."*

**On if he feels more added responsibility being in his role as a senior leader:**

*"Well, I think we had good leadership from our seniors last year and those guys are gone, so we've got to find new guys to step up and that's my goal and hopefully a couple of other people's goals to step up with me."*

**On when he realized he'd grow out of his role as a quarterback while in high school:**

*"I realized that pretty much my junior year. I got recruited for offensive line here and I played half my junior year at quarterback, then switched over to tight end that year. I committed here and then my senior year, I decided to play"*

*offensive line because I didn't want to come here not knowing what to do, so it'd just be a little one year under my belt at offensive line and they're doing a heck of a job with me right now and I'm just trying to improve."*

**On how much offensive line he played while recruited by Iowa:**

*"I didn't play anything. I just did quarterback and tight end."*

**On the skill sets that Mark Weisman, Jordan Canzeri and Damon Bullock all bring to Iowa's running game:**

*"Yeah, you know, we got Mark. He's a downhill runner, you know. He's not afraid of contact. Then we've got Jordan and Damon who like to get out on the edge, but they're not afraid of contact either. But we've also got LeShun Daniels, who's a big bull and we've also learned he's not afraid of contact. So whoever they're going to put behind us, we're just going to do our best to get them to the second level or past that. They'll do their job, we'll do our job."*

**On how explosiveness has been emphasized this spring to the offense by Greg Davis:**

*"We're just trying to play faster. We've been working on the no-huddle tempo and we're just getting our feet wet with it again. At first, it's tough learning all the signs again, but I think it's really going to help us in the fall here."*

**On if that's an element of the offense that will be used more in 2014:**

*"Yeah. We used it a little bit last year, but we've just changed some things up. So when you add something new, you just got to get used to it and I think that's what we're trying to do here. Then after a couple more of practices, we'll be able to play faster and faster and then hopefully carry that over into the fall."*

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# 2014 Spring Football position breakdowns: Wide Receivers (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

Going into 2013, it was expected that Iowa would have turbulence with its receiving corps. Outside of Kevonte Martin-Manley, it was a group full of players that were inexperienced and unproven.

Looking at the Hawkeyes' set of wide receivers right now, there's more experience and at least a subset of players who have proven themselves at one point or another.

Once again, Martin-Manley returns and after leading the team in receiving each of the past two seasons, it should be expected that he remains the No. 1 guy entering his senior year. Next in line would be a pair of juniors who showed glimpses in 2013. Tevaun Smith ultimately became a No. 1 wideout opposite Martin-Manley and showed progress late last season – his touchdown against Michigan where most of the yards came after the catch immediately comes to mind – and Jacob Hillyer proved he can be reliable in third-down situations when Iowa was throwing.

Now that both receivers are a year older and have more experience under their belts, these two guys will be leaned on even more now in 2014. Neither Smith nor Hillyer likely overtakes Martin-Manley as the No. 1 guy on the field or in the stat sheet, but those glimpses shown at various points



throughout 2013 need to become the norm in 2014.

Another name to keep an eye on is senior Damond Powell, who joined the Hawkeyes last fall as a junior college transfer. A lot was made last season about how he didn't have the playbook entirely down and therefore didn't see the field as much as Iowa fans probably wanted. However, his touchdown reception against Minnesota is proof of what Powell is capable of and he's someone that should be benefiting right now from these extra reps that he simply didn't have last year.

Two other receivers who gained some experience last season were sophomores Matt VandeBerg and Riley McCarron. How much either continues to be utilized however is something to watch because neither was listed on Iowa's spring 2-deep when it was released late last month and there's a big group of redshirt freshman wideouts they'll be competing with for playing time.

Of those redshirt freshmen, the two names to watch might be Derrick Willies and A.J. Jones. Willies was among those listed on the spring 2-deep when spring football began and Jones is someone who might possibly see the field as a returner early on.

The experience is there and the depth is there in this Hawkeye receiving corps. Rudock mentioned last week how this group is one he feels has come a long way, thus allowing him to make better decisions with the football during practice. How much either the experience or depth ends up being of benefit is something to keep an eye on now because this is a group that needs to continue developing under Bobby Kennedy if Iowa is going to have any success as an offense.

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# 2014 Spring Football position breakdowns: Running Backs (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

In years past, the running back stable at Iowa always seemed to have issues arise. Whether it was injuries, suspensions or whatever, there was always something.

Now the depth within this group showed in 2013, but for different reasons. Injuries and suspensions weren't the reasons, but rather Iowa had four running backs that all showcased different strengths. They managed to stay healthy, managed to stay out of trouble and even though the stats may not have always shown it, Iowa had options that it could choose to utilize and did.

The interesting dynamic is that all four of those running backs – Mark Weisman, Damon Bullock, Jordan Canzeri and LeShun Daniels – have returned for this spring and this coming 2014 campaign. While they won't get overworked during spring football, this group is one that will be essential to whether Iowa has success.

When the Hawkeyes started strong, it was because they were pounding the ball down defenses' throats. Two prime examples of this were in wins over Iowa State and Minnesota, as Weisman set a tone in both games. Late in the season, Iowa got back to having success on the ground and this started with Canzeri becoming more involved in the running game and providing a burst the other guys don't have.

But there's another reason for this group being essential to

Iowa's success in 2014. In losses to Michigan State, Wisconsin and LSU, the ground game was virtually non-existent. It didn't matter who was running the ball, as the Hawkeyes couldn't get anything going. If there's a good thing with everyone returning for Iowa, it's that these guys all have a chance to further develop and perhaps fare better against run defenses more stout like those teams were.

As for what to expect going forward, there probably won't be much change. It's going to start with Weisman. Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz made clear he thinks Weisman is a running back and given the developments of both Adam Cox and Macon Plewa at fullback, there's no reason to think Weisman goes back to fullback now.

That being said, this is also a chance for Iowa to work on making Canzeri a bigger part of its ground game. It started doing this late last season and Canzeri rewarded them with big runs and remaining durable. Throw in the fact that he's only a junior compared to Weisman and Bullock both being seniors and this is a huge opportunity for Canzeri to show he can be a No. 1 back in 2015.

Bullock will probably still get his share of carries, but he's a player that can also be effective in the passing game, as evident by his touchdown catch against Michigan State last season that came on a dump-off pass from Jake Rudock. As a pure running back, he probably doesn't warrant as many carries as either Weisman or Canzeri, but there is still a place for him in Greg Davis' offense.

Then there's Daniels. He saw some action as a true freshman last season and one would think that (if healthy) he'll see even more carries this coming season because it'll eventually be him and Canzeri atop the depth chart next year. Right now, there are two things keeping Daniels at the bottom of this 4-man group. One is he doesn't have the experience of the other three backs and the other is he hasn't separated himself yet

from Weisman in terms of burst. He's a bruising running back that can get you the tough yards, but so can Weisman. This isn't to say Daniels won't ever have that burst in his game, but it's not there just yet.

As long as this group can stay healthy, stay out of trouble and show that the durability last season wasn't an anomaly, this running back situation should remain a good problem for Iowa to have.

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## **2014 Spring Football position breakdowns: Quarterbacks (premium)**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

At this time last year, the quarterback position was an unknown for the Iowa Hawkeyes. In retrospect, it seemed obvious early on that Jake Rudock was going to end up being the starter, but the unknown had more to do with him not having had any sort of prior experience as he began to distinguish himself.

Rudock won the job and started all 13 of Iowa's games last season, yet the intrigue at this position wasn't so much Rudock starting as it was what happened behind him. As a redshirt freshman last year, C.J. Beathard began to separate himself from a junior college transfer in Cody Sokol and not only became the Hawkeyes' back-up signal-caller, but even finished three games in relief of an injured Rudock (including

the 2014 Outback Bowl against LSU).

Sokol is now out of the picture, as he made the decision to transfer to Louisiana Tech. With immediate eligibility, he has a chance to start for the Bulldogs and that was something that was never happening at Iowa. The Hawkeyes had a third-string quarterback in redshirt freshman Nic Shimonek, who traveled to every road game last season like Rudock did when he redshirted in 2011.

Some might say the burning question regarding this position is how much competition actually exists. But if past history is any indication, the odds of Beathard having any chance to beat out Rudock are slim. Rudock has that season of starting experience to his name and has two years of eligibility remaining. Barring some type of significant injury between now and the season opener against Northern Iowa on Aug. 30, expect Rudock to remain the starter because it's not as though he has done anything to warrant being benched.

Regardless of how small the gap possibly gets between the two though, Beathard's overall development is the most important thing to watch this spring when it comes to this group of quarterbacks. The potential is there and is something Beathard has displayed in games, but he looked raw in doing so.

Better decision-making is why Rudock has the edge now and probably will still have the edge this upcoming season. But coaches always use the cliché of how back-ups should prepare as though they're going to start and that mindset definitely applies here.

Even if Rudock starts every game again in 2014 like he did last season, his durability is going to be a question mark. With that in mind, Beathard's knowledge of Greg Davis' system and being able to play within his strengths is crucial. This is his chance to polish his game to an extent where maybe in the future, a more serious case could be made for him

starting. If he doesn't develop properly, not only would Rudock be creating further separation. The gap between Beathard and Shimonek would also narrow.

The intrigue with this group might not be as strong now as it was in 2013, but there's still some that exists. What happens behind Rudock now will factor into whether that intrigue increases or dwindles once the Hawkeyes break for fall camp in August.

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## **4/2/2014: Iowa spring football practice video**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Below is a combo of brief videos shot during the 15 minutes of Iowa's practice Wednesday afternoon that was open to the media. Highlighted in this video are team drills involving the offense, defense and special teams. This video is approximately 13 minutes in length.

The Hawkeyes hold their first of two open practices/scrimmages on April 12 at Valley Stadium in West Des Moines. Gates open to the public at 11:30 a.m. Central, and the practice portion begins at 1 p.m. Central.

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# 4/2/2014: Iowa spring football notebook



Iowa co-linebackers coach LeVar Woods discusses spring football during his press conference held Wednesday, April 2, 2014, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City. Woods is entering his third season on the Hawkeyes' coaching staff.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – When the Iowa Hawkeyes put the final pieces together in revamping their coaching staff, a different dynamic was re-introduced with the hiring of Jim Reid.

After working the 2012 season as Iowa's lone linebackers coach, LeVar Woods found himself splitting duties with Reid in 2013 when it came to coaching this group. This dynamic – at least last year anyway – paid off for the Hawkeyes. Both coaches were able to mesh, were able to coach specific players more one-on-one than before and the linebacking corps was one that led the Iowa defense en route to the Hawkeyes posting an 8-5 record after going 4-8 the year before.

When asked about working alongside as both coaches held press conferences on Wednesday, Woods described him as being “a huge, huge help” for him in terms of being someone to bounce ideas off of and seek input from when needed.

“He’s unbelievable, to be honest with you,” Woods said in reference to Reid, who is older in age but not as experienced inside the Iowa program. “It has been great for me just to see how he does things. I have my own thoughts and he has his own thoughts.”

But the success this group had wasn’t just a matter of the coaches being on the same page. It also featured a trio of seniors, all of whom had experienced. Right now, this group is a question mark. But not as big a question mark as one might believe.



Iowa co-linebackers coach Jim Reid discusses spring football during his press conference held Wednesday, April 2, 2014, at the Hayden Fry Football Complex in Iowa City. Reid is entering his second season on the Hawkeyes’ coaching staff.

The groups Woods and Reid are working with are the same as last season. Woods is in charge of coaching the LEOs (strong side linebackers), while Reid handles coaching the MIKES



(middle) and WILLS (weak side). The main point both coaches are stressing to their players right now is to play with aggression and not be afraid of making mistakes.

“We’re making a lot of mistakes, but we’re making mistakes playing very fast and before you can win, you have to play fast and then you have to be detailed in your assignments and your reads,” Reid said.

Last season, Woods had the luxury of working one-on-one with Christian Kirksey, a player Woods said Wednesday was “a generational type” player for Iowa and someone who “broke the mold” for how the LEO position should now be played. With Kirksey out of the picture, Woods now has the task this year of coaching up junior Travis Perry, who (barring injury) will start at LEO come August.

Perry, who joined the Hawkeyes as a walk-on, has limited game experience. Most of his playing time the past two years has come on special teams. His intelligence and athleticism are two attributes of his that Woods considers to be strengths.

“Moving forward, the things that he needs to work on that we’re working on with him are just his reaction to certain blocks and how he takes those blocks on,” Woods said. “He has an uncanny knack in zone coverage to be in the right place at the right time. He reads routes really, really well.

“The other thing we’re with him trying to work on improving is his pass-rush skills. Those are things that he hasn’t had to do in the past.”

Meanwhile, Reid has the challenge of coaching up a senior in Quinton Alston who has spent the last three years waiting in the wings at MIKE behind James Morris, as well as sophomore Reggie Spearman, who still hasn’t turned 18 yet. If there’s good news for Iowa, it’s that both Alston and Spearman saw the field plenty late last season when the Hawkeyes began incorporating what they called their “Raider” package on third

down.

The "Raider" was essentially a 3-4 look designed to confuse the opposing offense. Alston not only lined up as one of the inside linebackers, but Reid made mention of how he handled the play-calling out of that formation for the defense. As for Spearman, he lined up at defensive end in this package opposite Nate Meier and was used primarily as an extra pass rusher in this package.

What stood out most to Reid about how both Alston and Spearman played whenever they did see the field was the confidence both began to exude through their performance.

"We told Reggie to get down the field. Don't worry about it. James [Morris] will follow you and will clean up any read that you might have missed. That is what he did. He had some speed and he did it," Reid said. "Quinton made a lot of calls and then was where he was supposed to be. It was performance."

Performance is something both coaches hope to see in the fall. For now though, their message to all of their linebackers is to ball out.

"When you're a young player sometimes, ... personally I used to get all bound up and think about this and that, this step, that step, this responsibility," Woods said. "Instead, what we're looking for is just let loose and go. See who can run. See who can play. See who will hit. Who can put themselves in the right place and then coach them off of that."

**TRANSCRIPTS (courtesy of UI Sports Info.):**

[LeVar Woods \(4/2/2014\)](#)

[Jim Reid \(4/2/2014\)](#)

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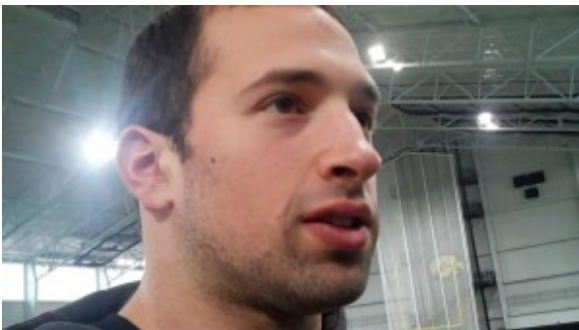
# 4/2/2014: Iowa player audio with photos (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

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

Below is audio from the following players – senior running back Mark Weisman, senior offensive tackle Brandon Scherff, senior linebacker Quinton Alston and junior quarterback Jake Rudock:



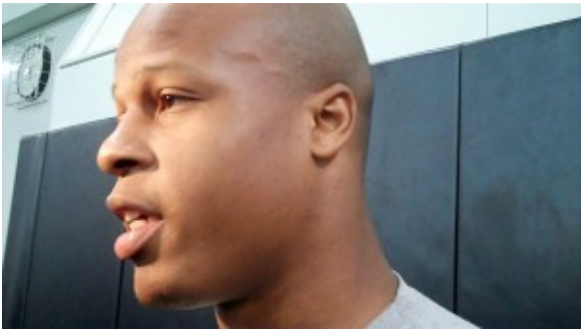
Mark Weisman, April 2, 2014

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Mark-Weisman-422014.mp3>



Brandon Scherff, April 2, 2014

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Brandon-Scherff-422014.mp3>



Quinton Alston, April 2, 2014

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Quinton-Alston-422014.mp3>



Jake Rudock, April 2, 2014

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Jake-Rudock-422014.mp3>