Important update regarding HawkeyeDrive.com

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

In 2010, I created *HawkeyeDrive.com* with the vision of devoting reliable and responsible coverage of both the Iowa football and men's basketball programs to Hawkeye fans all over. The last four years have been memorable for me and I hope they have been for all of you.

Today, I have unfortunate news to share. I am discontinuing *HawkeyeDrive.com*.

Is my career as a sports writer done? I hope not. I'd like to think it isn't. Maybe a new opportunity presents itself. But it won't be with this site any longer and whether it's covering the Hawkeyes again someday for a well-established medium or even still working in the state of Iowa remains to be seen.

This site, *HawkeyeDrive.com*, was my full-time job for four years. The business goals I envisioned at the start never materialized like I hoped and this day became inevitable. Obviously, I would've preferred coming to this reality at a time that wasn't the first week of college football season and I would've preferred the reason being that I have a new endeavor already lined up. But with the best interests of all affected parties in mind, including my own, this was a decision that needed to be made.

There are a lot of people I need to thank. Obviously, I have to start with my family for their support throughout these last four years. I need to thank those of you out there who were paid subscribers to this site. Your loyalty as customers

meant a lot these past four years and I sincerely hope I gave you your money's worth over this time. I need to thank my friends for all their support they've provided over the last few years as well.

Others I need to acknowledge: My friend Amber Capps for her help designing the *HawkeyeDrive.com* logo back in 2010 when this journey started, my friend and former *Daily Iowan* colleague Nate Whitney for being one of the first people who openly encouraged me to pursue *HawkeyeDrive.com* when it was still an idea, the guy those of you on Twitter know as @hawkeyegamefilm for the wealth of football knowledge he shared with me through our interactions the last 2-3 years and Randy Larson for all of his help ensuring I provided timely PTL coverage over the past five summers.

As for those in the industry, the first person I need to thank is Dave Schwartz. During *HawkeyeDrive.com's* infancy stages, Dave was someone I could turn to for advice and he gave me the best advice I ever received – *"Do everything."* In other words, anywhere you could be, anywhere a story could develop, be there. Write about it. This is why I covered every Hawkeye football game and every Hawkeye men's basketball game on U.S. mainland I possibly could.

This is why I went to Johnston, Iowa back in 2011 when Iowa Corn held that press conference acknowledging its Cy-Hawk Trophy was an abomination. This is why I went to North Liberty every summer night there was PTL, even if the story lines started getting stale. This is why I spent my Tuesday afternoons in the autumn attending Kirk Ferentz's press conferences. This is why every time Fran McCaffery had a teleconference with the local media, I called in no matter where I happened to be and made sure to ask him questions. This is why I covered events like the "Heart of Gold Gala" that honored Brett Greenwood in 2013, Norm Parker's "Celebration of Life" ceremony and Dick Vitale's fundraiser fighting pediatric cancer at Riverside Casino and Golf Resort.

The first event I ever covered for *HawkeyeDrive.com* was an I-Club function in the Amana Colonies where Reese Morgan raved about this true freshman named Brandon Scherff arriving on campus. *"Do everything."* Dave, thank you.

I need to thank Bill Casey and everyone else I ever worked with at *The Daily Iowan* during my five years there. I wouldn't have been in a position to start up a site like *HawkeyeDrive.com* if not for the values and skills I learned working there. If I'm able to remain in sports writing, I hope to continue applying everything I learned there toward my craft. *The Daily Iowan* and the Adler Journalism Building will always be dear to me. So will all the working relationships I developed with everyone there.

I need to thank the guys at *Black Heart Gold Pants* for regularly linking to my work. Whether it was Planned Sick Days linking my work, Ross anointing me as a "Friend of the Pants," or Patrick Vint being someone who appreciated early on how I operated this site, you guys will always have my respect and your site is one I'll continue visiting frequently no matter what my future entails.

One person from *BHGP* in particular I need to thank is Adam Jacobi, who was a colleague of mine when I spent roughly 10 months between 2011-2012 contributing additional Iowa football coverage for *CBS Sports* and its RapidReports network. It was Adam who convinced me to apply and after less than one calendar year running *HawkeyeDrive.com*, my body of work was enough for Tony Moss to offer me a position. Tony, Jon Gallo and all of my other RapidReports editors taught me how to become a more concise writer. Because of that experience, I'd like to believe I'm a better writer today than I was when I first started *HawkeyeDrive.com*. Adam, thank you.

To Jon Miller and Justin VanLaere (a.k.a. "Stormin' Spank"), thank you both. Like the guys at *BHGP*, you two never hesitated linking to my work on your *Hawkeye Nation* message boards. Both

of you also encouraged me along the way these past four years and I'll always appreciate that. This past spring, I was given the opportunity to contribute to the Iowa preview published by Dave Bartoo for *CFB Matrix*. It was Jon who made that possible. Jon, thank you for always thinking as highly of my reporting as you have.

To all my colleagues in the Iowa media, thank you. I said this when I left the *DI* and will say it again now, four years later – Hawkeye fans have it made. They really do. There's not a single person on either the football or basketball beats (print, online, TV, radio, past or present) I don't have the utmost respect for. Not one. The respect you all gave me as a fellow Iowa reporter through the years is something I always did and always will appreciate. I won't list every single one of you here for fear of omitting someone. But just know I truly respect each and every one of you and I can only hope the feeling is and remains mutual.

There are also plenty of other college football and basketball reporters (both local and national) I need to acknowledge. Whether it was because you gave me the time of day as a guest on "Talkin' Hawks" or because I shared worthwhile conversations with you during events we covered or just because of interactions we've shared on social media, the relationships I've established with reporters outside the state of Iowa – especially those covering other Big Ten schools – is something I appreciate as much as the relationships I made with those here in Iowa.

I need to thank Marty Tirrell and Trent Condon for all the opportunities they gave me to appear as a guest on "Mouth of the Midwest" and for helping me promote *HawkeyeDrive.com* any time I joined them. Trent even asked me once a few years back to help him co-host the show's first hour while Marty was on assignment and I had a blast doing that. I always enjoyed my encounters with them on "Mouth of the Midwest" and wish them both, as well as *1490 The Jock*, continued success in the

future.

To my good friend Chris Rowell, thank you. Chris signed on to be my weekly co-host on the "Talkin' Hawks" podcast in 2011 after I spent 2010 recording the podcast solo. Last year was a little more challenging because Chris moved back to Ohio, so we couldn't meet up and record it together in person like we had when he lived in Iowa City. But with respect to every other former Iowa football player I know, there's no one else I would've rather had as my co-host. Recording "Talkin' Hawks" with Chris was by far the one thing I always looked most forward to every week during football season and his contributions helped make Wednesday my favorite day of the week whenever we got together to record them. Chris, your loyalty to the podcast meant a lot. Your continued friendship means even more.

There are two well-known, well-established Hawkeyes I need to thank and those gentlemen are Bob Brooks and John Streif. From Day One on the football beat back in 2007, Bob always acknowledged me, treated me with the utmost respect and made me feel like I belonged. Knowing I earned Brooksie's respect was the highest of compliments and getting to know him these last seven years has provided so many memories. I'll still never forget the smile he cracked when I told him in 2010 I was starting this site. John is the nicest human being I've ever met. From a work perspective, he was always helpful and always gracious to me whenever I needed assistance. On a personal level, there's not a single time I can remember seeing John where he didn't greet me with a smile, wanting to shake my hand. The day these two men aren't regularly around Kinnick Stadium or Carver-Hawkeye Arena is the day Iowa will never be the same.

I need to thank Gary Dolphin. During the 2010 football season, I met Gary at Carlos O'Kelly's every Wednesday night after he taped "Hawk Talk" and conducted weekly one-on-one audio segments with him that I posted on *HawkeyeDrive.com* for

subscribers. Gary, thank you for giving me that opportunity. I enjoyed all those conversations we shared.

I need to thank Kirk Ferentz and Fran McCaffery. I'm sure there were instances where they probably didn't feel like talking to me, but did so anyway and treated me fairly in the process. Fairness is a journalistic value I believe to be extremely important and whether something I wrote was positive or negative, I hope both of them feel I was as fair with my coverage of their programs as they were with me.

I need to thank everyone in the Iowa Sports Information Department for giving me the opportunity to establish *HawkeyeDrive.com* as a credible news outlet. I specifically need to thank Phil Haddy. I know he retired two years ago, but *HawkeyeDrive.com* never would've been possible without his approval back in 2010 and I will always be grateful to Phil for opening that door. The same can be said for both Steve Roe and Matt Weitzel. Just like the two coaches, I'm sure there were times we didn't always see eye-to-eye, but Steve and Matt were always available to answer any questions I had and I want both of them to know I respect what they do and appreciate everything they've ever done for me.

Along these same lines, I need to thank Scott Chipman and his staff at the Big Ten for their assistance through the years. Whether it was answering an email about Big Ten Spring Meetings or making sure the Wi-Fi worked at either Big Ten Media Days or the Big Ten Tournament, Scott has always been helpful and I appreciate that he and the conference acknowledged *HawkeyeDrive.com* as an accredited outlet these last four years.

Lastly, I need to thank each and every one of you reading this because chances are most of you came to this link via Twitter. I'll get asked on occasion, "Why do you tweet so much and follow so many people?" When I first started tweeting in 2009, one of our editors at the *DI* suggested following back those

who follow you and interact with them. I've enjoyed many of my interactions with Hawkeye fans on Twitter these past five years and hope to continue communicating with those who choose to continue following me. You're the ones that inspired me to pursue *HawkeyeDrive.com* in the first place.

In closing, I just want to say it was a privilege to serve all of you who did subscribe to *HawkeyeDrive.com*, and even those of you who never subscribed, but frequently visited and read, watched or listened to any of my content on *HawkeyeDrive.com*. It was a privilege to cover Iowa football and write a story like this one about James and Greg Morris and everything else featured in the "24 Heisman Road" archive. It was a privilege to cover Iowa men's basketball and write a story like this one about Chris Street and everything else featured in the "40 Street" archive. It was a privilege putting together all the videos I posted after games and various events I covered for *HawkeyeDrive.com*.

I hope I earned your respect as an Iowa football and men's basketball reporter because that's all I could have asked for. I hope in one way or another that I made a difference in how these two programs are covered by others going forward while also maintaining the core values and ethics I believe every accredited reporter should possess, no matter the medium. I hope the next ambitious sports writer that starts an independent site covering college sports gets the same opportunities I had in terms of access and being able to build connections on both a local and national level.

Thanks for reading.