

April 3, 2013



An Interview With:

BOBBY KENNEDY

BOBBY KENNEDY: Good afternoon. I've been really impressed so far with the players here, their commitment, and their enthusiasm for practice. I'm still getting to know a bunch of the guys. But I think there's a real dedication here in terms of wanting to be good, the way they approach the game, their study, their work habits. So I'm excited. I'm excited not only to work with the wide receivers but also be a part of this offense, and I'm looking forward to the future.

The things I would say about the wide receivers, and if you know me, obviously you all don't know me, but over the years, this time of year and then also early in fall camp, I always talk about us being green and growing. We still have a lot to learn, techniques that we have to refine, but what I see from the wide receiver position thus far is that, number one, they're real eager, they come to work every day, and they want to be good. And so that excites me as a position coach and as a wide receiver coach because it's good to be around a bunch of guys that want to excel.

The other thing I would say is this: They're probably not only the wide receivers but the group as a whole, they're probably a little embarrassed about last year, and what I've seen out of these guys thus far is that they want to fix it. That, once again, excites me, because I do think that there's a commitment here, there's a real strong passion, and these guys have a willingness to want to be coached and to improve every day.

The other thing I'd say about myself coming to Iowa, the University of Iowa, I'm really excited about being here. I've known coach Ferentz on and off for a couple of years. I've admired him from afar. I had a chance back in, I think it was 1994, to possibly come here, and I

ended up going with an Iowa alum to Wake Forest, Jim Caldwell, so I think all good things come around again, opportunities.

Like I said, it's an honor for me to be here. Obviously working with coach Davis, we had a close relationship in the past, a good working relationship. I think he knows what I bring to the table. I also know that he trusts me and he expects a lot not only out of myself but also the wide receivers and that position and production out of that position.

But I also think that we're on the same page with not a lot of things but many things.

So I'm excited about being here. I'm excited about being a part of the Hawkeye family, and I look forward to the future.

Q. One thing, from Texas, you're probably looking at a different talent pool in terms of wide receivers. As far as player development how do you get guys to perform at a level you're used to?

BOBBY KENNEDY: What I would say is this: Player development, there's challenges at every place you go to. I remember when I first went to Texas, they had just lost Roy Williams, B.J. and Sloan Thomas, and those at that time were considered three of the best receivers as a group to ever play at Texas. And then we had some other guys like Nate Jones, Billy Pittman and Limas Sweed, Tony Jeffrey, who had been around a while, but none of them had significant playing time.

My group was looked upon as a group that wasn't, number one, a very good group, and then they didn't have any experience. I'm approaching this situation just like I did at the University of Texas. I would say this: Coming into this situation, you have Kevonte Martin-Manley, Tavaun Smith, Donald Shumpert, Jordan Cotton, there's some guys that have some snaps under their belt, and so the thing that excites me is that when I went into

Texas there was guys with really not much experience, and we had to develop those guys and groom them, and they ended up probably during my time at Texas, they ended up probably being one of the most productive groups in Texas football history.

I'm looking at this situation as the same thing. You know, Kevonte has obviously had some success and he's been a playmaker around here, but those other guys are going to have to grow and develop. But once again, the thing that I said earlier in my statement, we've got to develop players here, and we have to develop them pretty quickly.

And I think these guys, with their attitude and their effort, like I said, they're eager, and they want to be coached. And so I'm excited about that.

When I first came in -- you never know what you're getting into, what type of group it is, what type of guys are in the room, and the thing that I've been really pleased with and really -- really pleased with is that these players are, like I said, eager. They want to do well. They want to please. They like being coached. And so I'm optimistic for the future of this group.

Q. You said you noticed right away how hungry they are after what happened last season. The receivers took a lot of blame for it.

BOBBY KENNEDY: Yeah, well, I think this: I think if you look at the receivers last year that they did some good things. I think any time you're in a new offense, there's going to be growing pains, there's going to be struggles, but now they're in their second year, and what I keep preaching to them every day is that, number one, this is the second year, okay. That first spring you kind of got your feet wet, the season there were some growing pains. Well, now, okay, they don't have to think as much as they can let their athletic ability take over because they know what's going on in the offense.

So I did think they got some blame last year probably, but on the other hand what I would say, just being a new guy coming in, they probably were an underappreciated group. I watched them block last year, watched them do some other things. They do some really good things on the perimeter. Now, my job and my charge is to take that to the next step and hopefully they'll become a more productive group.

Q. You said that they were maybe embarrassed about last year. What makes you think that or say that?

BOBBY KENNEDY: Well, I think this: Obviously there's a standard at Iowa. Coach Ferentz has had a tremendous career and record here in this program. I mean, going back with coach Fry.

To me, when I walked in this place, I understand that it's a football place, and I think any time that you go 4-8 and you don't go to a bowl game, I think there is some embarrassment. They might not say it, but their actions in terms of doing extra things, working; they want this thing to turn around.

Q. What's it say to the guys on the roster that you guys went out and recruited five wide receivers? What's that say to the guys who are here?

BOBBY KENNEDY: Well, I think my first meeting with the guys, what I told them was this: That number one, I want us to have fun, I want us to enjoy what we're doing. I want them to come into the room and learn and it to be a room not of fear and intimidation but really of learning. But then I also pointed out that, hey, there's a number of guys on the way, and the one thing you'll understand about me or that they'll understand about me is I like all the guys that play for me. You like different aspects of different guys, but also what I told them was, the thing that you'll get to know about me is I'm not a guy to sit back and play favorites just because I like you. The best guys are going to play, and if it's a freshman, if it's a redshirt freshman, those guys coming in are going to have an opportunity.

Now, it also depends on how quickly they can pick up the offense, how well they execute the offense and those things, but those guys are going to get a look early in camp and throughout camp next fall.

Q. You saw this offense work at Texas and obviously it struggled last year. In your mind just maybe from a wide receiver perspective, what needs to happen this year for it to click?

BOBBY KENNEDY: I think everybody, in the second year, being on the same page, they're more comfortable, they're playing faster because they understand the concepts better. I think you'll

see a change.

But obviously it comes down to guys going out and making plays. You know, we always talk about it's not necessarily the X's and O's, it's the Jimmy's and the Joe's. Those guys are the ones that have got to make the plays, they've got to execute the offense, and then it's Greg's charge or my charge to help those guys and put them in the right position to make those plays.

Q. The guys on the depth chart, do you think what you've seen so far that they'll be ready to step up their production come fall?

BOBBY KENNEDY: I've been really pleased with Tevaun and Jake Hillyer thus far. I think there's good competition going on at X. You look at Donald Shumpert and then also Jordan Cotton, I think those guys can really run, and we've got to find ways to get them the ball. But I do think they'll step up. Once again, I think that's a part of their maturing, even though those guys are two of the older guys. You'll hear me say this all the time, also, when I went into my room for my first meeting, I kept Jordan and Donald out, and I said part of my job is to make sure you leave Iowa the right way and go out the right way. Part of my job is to make sure I coach them well and get them in the right positions, but what I want to do is make sure when the guys walk out of this program they feel good about what they've accomplished and they feel good about their experience at Iowa. Obviously academically, but also their football, they'll be able to do that.

And I see those guys -- I think from what I've seen so far, I think they'll step up to the challenge. But we're only in day four of spring practice.

Q. Does it make your job more difficult not having a sure-fire No. 1 quarterback for your guys to work with?

BOBBY KENNEDY: I don't think so. I think there's good, open competition right now. What I've seen from the quarterbacks is that they all throw the ball well. You know, there's always -- that position is always a tough position when you don't have an established guy so there's going to be some mistakes that younger guys make. But as they gain that experience they'll get better. But you have No. 1 guy, No. 2 guy, No. 3 guy, anytime one of those guys can go down, so it's good we're working with all of them right now.

Q. Did you come in and see something you wanted to change technique wise or maybe you came in and automatically tried to erase from the ranks?

BOBBY KENNEDY: I think with the previous coach, Erik Campbell and I are good friends, and I've known him for a long time, and I think it's just like, for example, when I went into the University of Colorado, I'd never been in the West Coast offense before. I had a lot to learn in the West Coast offense. And it took me a little while, okay, and I think in this situation that there's some things that I see technique wise or just understanding of the overall scheme that when I was able to come in and watch tape and watch tape of the guys, say, this is how I want this done rather than this way, and then explain it why.

Well, the reason why I'm able to do that, come in and have those opinions, I was in this offense for seven years, so I have a little better understanding maybe of what's going on, where it's like I said, when I went to the West Coast offense and it was, wow, you know, I didn't realize how much I didn't know until I got there.

Q. Were pre-snap reads an issue for the wide receivers last year?

BOBBY KENNEDY: I don't think so. What we talk about, I think there's a certain way you teach things and the base that I taught from when we started watching tape is, okay, what's the first thing -- when you get a line what's the first thing you go out and do. There was kind of crickets in the room because I think they're probing, what does this guy want me to say, right? Well, I said, okay, forget about what you've known in the past. Here's how we're going to approach it.

I'm not saying it was right or wrong before or anything like that, but I think you have to break it down for them. So what I talked to them about, okay, the first thing when you go out and get a line is it double safety or single safety? If it's a double safety now your focus moves to the corner. You know what the play is, you know where you're going, but now how are you going to react off the corner? He can do one of three things, he can backpedal, he can stay hard, he can be in man coverage. There's not much, right? There's not much mystery to that.

Well, so if you look at the double safety look, okay, then you see the corner, you say, okay, boy, he's going to do probably one of these two

things, backpedal, stay hard. Now you take your release off that. Now you read the defense from there.

So what it is, I think, is you try to break it down in simplistic fashion because I'm a simpleton, okay, and you break it down and then you give tools to those kids from there.

And like I said, I'm just like the players. I always want to be green and growing. I don't want to be ripe and rotting and say, this is the only way we're going to do this because that might not be the best way.

But when you're talking about pre-snap reads and things like that, I think you have to break it down for them. They know the play, they get the pre-snap read, now what you do to do react off that.

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