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Rudock to lead Iowa



-AP photo by Charlie Neibergal

Iowa quarterback Jake Rudock scrambles for yardage during an NCAA college football open practice, Saturday, Aug. 17, 2013, in Iowa City, Iowa.

Iowa excited for debut of new QB

"Consistency over the long haul (made the difference)," Ferentz said. "We were most interested in what happened once we got back in August. ... Jake grabbed a bit of a lead and he has done a good job of building on that."



Kirk Ferentz

Northern Illinois. "I wouldn't say I was surprised because I've prepared all along as if I was going to be the guy. That was my mindset," Rudock said. "It was a great feeling, but I know I have to continue to work every bit as hard now as I did to get to this point."

Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz said during his weekly news conference a steadiness in Rudock's play presented him with the opportunity to replace James Vandenberg, the only quarterback to take a snap for the Hawkeyes last season.

"Consistency over the long haul (made the difference)," Ferentz said. "We were most interested in what happened once we got back in August. ... Jake grabbed a bit of a lead and he has done a good job of building on that."

Rudock hasn't taken a snap in a game since quarterbacking St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to a 15-0 record and a state championship in 2010.

That season, he completed 157-of-242 passes for 2,827 yards and 36 touchdowns while being intercepted just three times.

The Hawkeyes' new quarterback recalled that his high school coach, George Smith, described Rudock's approach as "businesslike" at the time.

That hasn't changed. "He's been consistent all along," tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz said. "He showed last spring that he could play with the (first unit) and he continued right along with that. He doesn't get rattled, real steady. Good plays or bad, he keeps on playing."

Beathard shares the second line on the depth chart with Sokol, but he will be prepared to take the field if the need arises.

"I'm preparing this week as if I'm going to play. That's my job," Beathard said. "We had a good competition, we all got a fair chance, and now our job is to support Jake and help him anyway we can. We also will continue to compete and push him every day in practice."

Given the unique circumstances — Ryan Driscoll in 1994 was the last Iowa quarterback to start in his collegiate debut — Ferentz will give Rudock time to grow into his role. "We're going to let him

play. He's earned that over time. We have confidence in both C.J. and Cody, but Jake is going to play and we'll let him go," Ferentz said. "It's like anything, we don't want somebody looking over their shoulder. That's not productive. He needs to be looking at what is in front of him."

Rudock plans to do just that. "Ever since high school, I've been working to get a shot in college and hopefully this is just the beginning," Rudock said.

He feels good about both the depth and quality of the skill players who surround him and about the strength of the line in front of him.

Rudock does not expect a perfect beginning.

Juggling this week's game plan with the first week of a fall academic course load which includes Organic Chemistry II and Physics I, the microbiology and pre-med major views that as unrealistic. However, he does expect Saturday's body of work to create a foundation for the future.

"There will be mistakes, that is part of it, but hopefully there is more good than bad and it can be a productive beginning," Rudock said. "I'm looking forward to being back on the field. I've waited a long time for the chance."

Texas A&M mum about Manziel's status

Kristie Rieken
AP Sports Writer
COLLEGE STATION, Texas (AP) — Johnny Football was the elephant in the room Tuesday at Texas A&M.

The seventh-ranked Aggies head into Saturday's home opener against Rice with questions still swirling about whether Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Johnny Manziel will play against the Owls. The NCAA is investigating whether he was paid for his autograph, a potential violation of amateurism rules that could threaten his eligibility.

It was the only thing anyone really wanted to talk about on Tuesday when the Aggies addressed the media. The topic, however, was off limits.

Athletic director Eric Hyman said Monday night that he'd instructed everyone in the program not to talk about Manziel. And if that wasn't clear enough, a member of the sports information department slowly and sternly read the statement, not once, but twice during the session.

Reporters asked anyway, and coach Kevin Sumlin did what Hyman asked.

"We're not discussing that," he said. "I thought we went over that right from the beginning."

He later added that they have a plan for any number of situations that could happen with their players and team, and that they plan for the possible absence of players every week.

ESPN, citing an anonymous source, reported that Manziel met with NCAA investigators over the weekend. CBSSports.com, also citing anonymous sources, reported that Manziel told the investigators he didn't take money for his autograph.

While Sumlin wouldn't discuss Manziel's availability for Week 1, he had no problem talking about whether football has helped the quarterback deal with everything going on off the field.

"I know he likes to play football," Sumlin said. "I think the structure that he has had since Aug. 4 has been nothing but helpful."

If Manziel doesn't play against the Owls, the Aggies will use either junior Matt Joeckel or freshman



Johnny Manziel

Kenny Hill. Joeckel is more of a pocket passer and Hill is a dual-threat quarterback. Joeckel has thrown just 11 passes in his college career. Hill, who starred at Texas high school powerhouse Southlake Carroll, threw for 2,291 yards and 20 TDs and ran for 905 yards and 22 more scores as a senior last season.

Sumlin said the competition between the two is ongoing, and that he's been pleased with the progress of both players. He said it helps his team because they've always allowed all quarterbacks to get work with the first team.

"Anybody who has been around knows that we rotate players with the first team, has seen us rotate snaps with the first team and because of that I think it gives your team a chance to develop a relationship or camaraderie with that first team if something happens," Sumlin said.

Sumlin is confident that Texas A&M's offense will be OK no matter who's running the show because of his offensive line. The group, led by left tackle Jake Matthews, is expected to be a strength despite losing Matt's twin brother, Luke Joeckel, when he was selected second overall in the draft. Matthews, the son of NFL Hall of Famer Bruce Matthews, will be joined on the line this season by little brother Mike Matthews at center.

"We've got a really solid offensive line which takes a little bit of the pressure off Matt and Kenny," Sumlin said. "When Johnny's taking snaps, when he's in there he's really trying to help the perimeter guys. Our offensive line gives us an opportunity to rotate those quarterbacks and have them be successful."

NFL to study hits to knees

Barry Wilner
AP Pro Football Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — The NFL will keep a close eye on hits to the knees of defenseless players this season, with the possibility of extending the rules protecting such players.

If the league's competition committee finds enough evidence this season that hits to the knees are "becoming a problem," it could take action, chief of football operations Ray Anderson told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The committee could make a recommendation to

the owners next March to prohibit direct hits to the knees of defenseless players. The owners would then vote on such a change.

"We are always looking at plays that may elevate themselves and we do include in that category hits on defenseless players," Anderson said. "And certainly the hits to knees to players who have not had the opportunity to protect themselves or are not looking in the direction of where the hit comes from — we have had a couple hits whereby a player was

hit below (or at) the knees."

Currently, hits to the head and neck of defenseless players are outlawed. But two direct hits to the knee in preseason games that injured Miami tight end Dustin Keller and Minnesota defensive tackle Kevin Williams have drawn complaints from some players.

Keller is out for the season with several torn knee ligaments. Williams has a hyperextended knee.

Anderson said the league will monitor plays during the year, study the

data when the competition committee begins meeting after the season and see whether such hits to the knees are an "aberration or becoming a problem."

"This issue has not directly come up," Anderson added. "But when we have had discussions when making the head and neck area completely off-limits to players, there was some concern players might lower their targets and might include knees and below. We will look at that going forward."

Tebow survives patriots roster cut to 75

Howard Ulman
AP Sports Writer
FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — Tim Tebow has survived the New England Patriots' mandatory roster cut to 75 players.

The third-string quarterback faces another hurdle when all NFL teams must reduce their rosters on Saturday to the regular-season limit of 53.

The Patriots released tight end Evan Landi and defensive lineman Anthony Rashad White, both rookies, on Tuesday.



Tim Tebow

The moves came one day after they cut the roster from 84 to 77 players. Tebow is expected to see considerable playing time Thursday night against the New York Giants in the Patriots' final exhibition game. He played poorly in the first two games and did not play in the third.