

Dear Barta: Just say 'no' to Friday football

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 06 November 2016 08:06 - Last Updated Sunday, 06 November 2016 08:09



There were two big stories regarding the University of Iowa football program this past week, and neither one was good.

In fact, they were both awful.

Earlier in the week, UI athletic director Gary Barta said he would follow the money-grubbers at the Big Ten Conference and consider letting the Hawkeyes play football games on a Friday night in early September, thus agreeing to cripple the lifeline of the Iowa high schools that have formed the backbone of the Hawkeye program through the years.

Imagine the Hawkeyes playing a game at Kinnick Stadium on a Friday night when Iowa City West, Iowa City High or Iowa City Regina are playing a home game as well, let alone all the other high schools in Johnson County, Linn County and around the state.

The attendance at those high school games would be devastated, depriving schools of thousands of dollars in gate receipts and concessions just so the Hawks can pad their coffers a little more.

Shame on Barta for even considering such a move.

Alan Beste, the director of the Iowa High School Athletic Association, has strongly condemned the idea and hopes to persuade Barta to change his mind. Let's hope he does.

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Michigan and Penn State have said they will not host games on their campuses on Friday nights and Iowa should do likewise. There's nothing wrong with the Hawkeyes playing Nebraska on the Friday after Thanksgiving, because the high school season will be over by then, but playing on a Friday night in September is a dreadful idea.

The second piece of bad news for the Iowa football program occurred Saturday night at Penn State, where the Hawkeyes were thoroughly whipped 41-14 in an extremely poor performance.

If you watched the game on the Big Ten Network or listened on the Iowa Radio Network, you know the ugly story. The Hawkeyes surrendered 599 yards, the second-most during Kirk Ferentz's 18 years as head coach, and they managed to collect only 234 yards in total offense for themselves, including just 30 yards on the ground.

Penn State tailback Saquon Barkley shredded Iowa for 167 yards on just 20 carries, including a gorgeous 57 yard zig-zag touchdown, and quarterback Trace McSorley passed for 240 yards and ran for another 40.

The tale of the game was decided early when the Hawkeyes failed to convert short-yardage opportunities on their first three possessions of the game, failing on 4th-and-1, 3rd-and-2 and 3rd-and-1.

Iowa's longest running play of the night - the longest - was only six yards.

C.J. Beathard hit 18 of 26 passes for 204 yards and two touchdowns, which is normally a pretty fair performance, but he was sacked five times and harried on many other occasions.

The Hawkeyes fell to 5-4 overall and 3-0 in the Big Ten, a far cry from last year when they went 12-0 in the regular season, played in the Big Ten championship game and went to the Rose Bowl.

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Iowa's offense has completely stalled in losses this year to North Dakota State (231 yards), Wisconsin (236 yards) and now Penn State (234 yards). And now second-ranked Michigan will be coming to Iowa City this Saturday to test the Hawkeyes, and Michigan will be the best team the Hawks have faced all season. The Wolverines annihilated Maryland, 59-3, Saturday and do not mind running up the score.

Nobody expected the Hawkeyes to go 12-0 again this year, but nobody expected to see them sitting at 5-4 with the Wolverines coming to town.

It was a rough week in all regards.