

## Ferentz cruises along with new assistants

Written by Bob Brooks

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As you're reading this, think about Kirk Ferentz and his 220 best friends who at this hour are on the final leg of their annual cruise in the Caribbean.

Coach loves to play along with the press, as he has done in the two newest hires on the football staff. With Kirk, timing is everything.

Consequently, the printed press release that two former Iowa football players have joined the staff came on a Saturday. Coach Ferentz's prepared comments accompanied the hiring announcement of his son Brian and LeVar Woods.

Make no mistake, those are excellent hires, but Coach Ferentz didn't want any formal comment, namely audio or video, and consequently in the release there was just a written note from the head Hawk.

Incidentally, Ferentz was in San Juan, Puerto Rico, at the time, and of course was not available for further comment. So with that in mind, I thought I would comment.

The hiring of Woods and Ferentz gives a youth effect to the Hawkeye coaching staff that I think will be most valuable in the area of high school recruiting. These two former Iowa players bring a great passion for the Hawkeyes to the recruiting arena.

They're great people, excellent athletes and fine coaches, but in the main their ability to come across to a high school recruit will be invaluable. They should fit the Hawkeye bill extremely well.

Since the cruise ends this weekend, I would suspect that sometime next week we'll get a

printed release about a new offensive coordinator, who I'm sure has already started his homework on the Iowa players for spring practice.

ON THE BASKETBALL FRONT, timing also is everything. As the Hawkeyes come down the stretch, their timing with those wins over Indiana and Wisconsin was just perfect. And that is one reason why Matt Gatens' 30-point performance against the Hoosiers and 33 against Wisconsin at crunch time will be long remembered in the Hawkeyes' stirring victories.

And so will the fact that this Hawkeye, who has experienced some bad losses and tough moments, can always say he went through his Iowa career having never lost at home to Indiana.

Those performances also brought back memories of the Iowa basketball team of 1970 and to a scoring machine by the name of John Johnson, who between 1968 and 1970 had single-game totals of 49, 46 and 38 points in the era of the two-point basket.

So while Gatens' play was remarkable, it will be remembered more for the timing than for the totals.

A TIP OF THE FEDORA to Courtney Strait of Cedar Rapids Kennedy as the girls basketball Player of the Year in the Metro and in the MVC Mississippi Division. And to Tom Lilly of Xavier, the Coach of the Year in the Valley Division.

The drive for the boys state tournament continues Friday night at Kennedy, Linn-Mar and Jefferson, with Xavier trying for the upset on the Cougars' home court.

City High will face the Linn-Mar Lions on the Lions' home floor, and it's nice to see that Matt Lassen now figures to be an important force to the Lion attack in their run for yet another state tournament appearance.

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The Jefferson J-Hawks host Marshalltown Friday night in another substate semifinal. Good luck to all of them.

*(Bob Brooks is sports director at KMRY and has been one of the leading voices of college and prep sports in Eastern Iowa for more than 65 years. He is a 10-time winner of the Iowa Sportscaster of the Year Award, and was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Indiana in 2004. His sports reports can be heard weekday afternoons at 4:30 and 5:30, and Saturdays at 6:40 for the Hawkeye football wrap-up.)*