

Iowa-Minnesota rivalry has waned

Written by Bob Brooks

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When you're an Iowa native and a sports guru, you have grown up with the Iowa-Minnesota football series. But as I have observed over a period of time, at least on the Iowa side of the border, it's not the big deal it used to be.

There was a time, with that bronze pig on the line, that an Iowa win could define a whole season. Go back to 1939 and the Ironmen, in a 10-day period, defeated Notre Dame and Minnesota. On the national stage at that time, it was enough to make the Hawks the darlings of the country and make Nile Kinnick the Heisman Trophy winner.

Such is not the case in 2012, but maybe this Saturday's Iowa-Minnesota game has more of an overall hue to it than in recent memory. This time of year, you don't want to say "must win," but a Hawk victory over the Gophers is a "must" after what happened last week in the one-point loss to Central Michigan.

In the national scope of things, the people in Vegas think Iowa is a 6 1/2-point favorite, even though the Hawks have lost the last two games to the Gophers in Minneapolis.

Going back to how important this series used to be, when Dr. Eddie Anderson was the coach, I remember a game at Minnesota in which the Hawks went in as the favorites and lost. The game was always played at the end of the season, not the last week in September.

It was one of those cold, blustery days and Iowa had on sheepskin-lined coats to keep warm on the sidelines. Anderson had been an All-American player at Notre Dame, and that Monday after the loss at Minneapolis, I ran into the Iowa trainer, Doyle Alsop.

He said, "Come in here, I want to show you something." And he handed me one of those sideline coats that had every button torn off it. And he explained to me that Dr. Eddie had in one motion ripped off all of those buttons during the Iowa-Minnesota game.

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And that day, Doyle had two of Iowa's strongest players try to make the same move, and they couldn't get the job done. That shows the intensity of the Iowa-Minnesota series at that time.

This Saturday, as the Big Ten opens the 117th conference season, when they ask, "What's happening in Iowa City?," the answer has to be that Floyd of Rosedale came back home.

That's the line from an Iowa native who still regards Iowa-Minnesota as a Big Ten tradition.

(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.)