

## Dukes brings 'Sunday Morning Quarterback' to KGYM

Written by Jim Ecker

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Mark Dukes believed strongly in the old-fashioned values of being fair, balanced and well-informed during his distinguished newspaper career at The Gazette.

He brings those same qualities to his radio work at KGYM, but now he has the freedom to inject his own opinions into the conversation. He's not reluctant to express a thought, but he's not on the air to be highly critical or call for a coach to be fired.

"There are others out there on 'shock' radio or 'shock' TV that do that and that's how they get ratings, but that's not me," he said. "It's going to be reasoned criticism for me. That's who I am.

"I can't be somebody that I'm not. It's going to be reasoned criticism, and the facts to back it up."

Dukes has been the co-host of the GYM Class on KGYM with sports director Scott Unash for the past five years. Now he's the No. 1 man on a new show that's called the "Sunday Morning Quarterback," airing on Sundays from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. with Tyler Tjelmeland, a recent University of Iowa graduate who attended Prairie High School.

The new show is being broadcast on two of the radio company's FM stations -- 107.5 FM in Cedar Rapids and 106.3 FM in Iowa City -- but not on KGYM-AM 1600 itself. The main focus of the show is to dissect Iowa football games, with the benefit of a night's sleep and a little reflection.

The first show aired last week, after the Hawkeyes nipped Northern Illinois 18-17 at Soldier Field in Chicago. The second show came on the heels of Iowa's 9-6 loss to Iowa State, and Dukes did not pull any punches.

The Hawkeyes have scored only one touchdown in their first two games and Dukes noted the obvious lack of playmakers on the squad so far. He also took a poke at the UI offense, which supposedly was going to be different this year with a new offensive coordinator.

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Greg Davis replaced Ken O'Keefe as the offensive coordinator, but Dukes stressed that head coach Kirk Ferentz is still the man in charge. Ferentz has been successful with a conservative approach to the game and is not likely to make radical changes with a new coordinator, he noted.

"My point is, this is still a Kirk Ferentz team," Dukes told his audience. "It's the CEO's plan, it's Kirk Ferentz's plan. He (Davis) has not put a stamp on it, because Kirk is Kirk."

"My point in this whole thing is, I didn't see anything different. It's still Kirk. In terms of the Iowa offense, there is absolutely no element of surprise, in my mind."

A little later Dukes had this to say: "Some of the things I saw yesterday are not going to cut it in the Big Ten. It might not cut it next week."

Iowa's next game is against Northern Iowa, which gave Wisconsin a good battle before falling 26-21 in Madison in Week 1. The Panthers blasted Central State, a Division II opponent, 59-0 Saturday night in the UNI-Dome.

KGYM started two other new Iowa football shows on its FM stations this season. There is now a one-hour pregame show and a two-hour postgame show for every game. Dukes participates in the pre-game show, which is taped ahead of time, but is not a member of the post-game show.

Dukes felt there was room for a Sunday morning show as well and took the idea to KGYM president Rob Norton.

"I told Rob I think there's a market for a Sunday morning show because people are still thinking about it the next morning, whether they're having breakfast or getting out of church or whatever it may be. It's still on their minds and there's no real vehicle in this market on Sunday morning for people to express an opinion."

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"I think that was the whole premise. Rob bought in, and hopefully it will take off."

The "Sunday Morning Quarterback" had two callers the first week. It doubled to four callers in Week 2, with Dukes and Tjelmeland answering their questions and offering opinions.

Dukes, 55, began working for The Gazette sports department in 1972 when he was 16 years old and a student at Jefferson High School. He spent about 26 years at The Gazette, including 15 years as sports editor before leaving the company.

He still thinks like a print journalist and writes a weekly column for the Metro Sports Report, but now he's a five-year veteran of the radio game as well. "It's certainly different," he said. "There's no spell-check, no word-check.

"When the game is over, the newspaper guy's work is just beginning and it could be two, three or four hours. On the radio, you turn off the microphone and pack up your stuff and head on to your next project. It's quite different in that regard."

Dukes said he doesn't focus on talking to a mass audience when he's on the air. He thinks in terms of having a regular conversation, only with lots of listeners. "When I'm on the GYM Class with Scott, it's basically a conversation I might have over a cup of coffee," he said.

Dukes reads a variety of newspapers, many of them online, to keep informed about the Hawkeyes and other topics. He also does his own research, makes his own phone calls, watches games on TV and forms his own opinions, just like he did as a print journalist.

"It's similar for me," he said. "I want to be prepared, I want to be as informed as possible. I'm old-school. I've got to read the newspaper in the morning to get my day started."

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Simply put, he wants to know what he's talking about. And he's not going to make any outrageous comments merely to attract a crowd.

"I'm known around the station as the voice of reason, for whatever reason," he said. "I try to look at both sides when I form an opinion. But at the end of the day, when you're on the radio you have to pick one side or the other.

"I try to do it justice. Let's put it that way."