

Written by Jim Ecker
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If you've followed my sportswriting career here in Cedar Rapids, you know that I covered the University of Iowa football team for 10 years as the primary beat reporter for The Gazette.

Those 10 years, from 1989 through 1998, coincided with Hayden Fry's final 10 years with the Hawkeyes and included trips to the Rose Bowl, Holiday Bowl, Alamo Bowl (twice) and Sun Bowl (twice).

During the midst of all that, I was honored to be named the Iowa Sportswriter of the Year in 1995 by the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association, a handsome award that sits next to the desk in my office.

I offer that information with pride and humility, but also as a prelude to the announcement that I'll be covering the Iowa football team again this season after an 18-year absence.

As some of you know, I was named the new sports director at KMRY radio earlier this summer to succeed Bob Brooks following his passing in June. In addition to handling the daily shows at 4:50 p.m. and 5:50 p.m. Monday through Friday, my bosses at KMRY have asked me to assume Brooksie's old role as the host of a 10-minute show on Sundays that will re-cap Iowa's football game from the day before.

The football show on KMRY will begin this Sunday at noon and will run throughout the season, with interviews, observations and news about the Hawkeyes.

I'll be attending all of Iowa's home games and watching all of the road games on TV, collecting material for the KMRY reports and renewing my ties with the Hawkeyes. And armed with all that information, I've decided to write a weekly column about the Iowa football team this season that will be posted right here on the Metro Sports Report website.

MSR covering Iowa football this year

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All of the columns will be posted by early Sunday morning following the games. And although I have very little "inside" information about the Hawkeyes heading into the 2016 campaign, I plan to get to work and bring you interesting reports.

I'm a big college football fan and I've certainly followed the Hawkeyes since I left the beat, but you should know that I'm not a Hawkeye fan. I'd normally rather see them win or lose, but I won't be cheering for the Hawks or distraught if they fall short.

I'll try to bring you honest accounts of the games, win or lose, and will not be reporting through black-and-gold tinted glasses.

I've done a little preliminary research into this year's team and was interested to learn that Kirk Ferentz is just 16 wins away from tying Hayden Fry's school record of 143 victories with the Hawkeyes. Fry finished 143-89-6 in 20 years at Iowa, and Ferentz is 127-87 as he begins his 18th year as head coach.

With any luck, Ferentz could catch - and then pass - Fry next season.

Ferentz, by the way, is tied with Oklahoma Coach Bob Stoops for the longest active tenure at any FBS school in the nation. Stoops, who played and coached at Iowa, is in his 18th year with the Sooners and was actually hired a day before Iowa announced it hired Ferentz. Stoops was interviewed by Iowa at the time, but he went to Oklahoma instead.

Anyway, I hope you'll enjoy my reports on KMRY this season. And I hope you'll enjoy the Sunday columns here on the Metro Sports Report.