

Fry sent message in 1979 game with Sooners

Written by Bob Brooks

Wednesday, 21 December 2011 21:57 - Last Updated Friday, 23 December 2011 17:18



Holiday greetings from the Arizona desert as Iowa prepares for Oklahoma in the Insight Bowl with the usual no-nonsense approach from Kirk Ferentz.

I don't think you have to be reminded that he has tough workouts when he gets to the game site and puts a great emphasis on having his team as well-prepared as possible.

Iowa and Oklahoma have met only one time before. That was in the 1979 season when Hayden Fry and the Iowa Hawkeyes went to Norman, Okla., to play Barry Switzer and the Sooners.

This was the second game of the Fry era and he was trying to get a foundation established for what became one of Iowa's all-time best football periods.

The Hawks were three-touchdown underdogs going into the game and Switzer, of course, was king of the hill with the Oklahoma program at top speed. The Sooners, as they have been known to do, both in the past and recently, figured that if they showed up, they'd win.

And so it was on that sunny day at the Oklahoma stadium: The overconfident Sooners against the upstart Hawkeyes. Right off the bat, the game didn't go that way.

Iowa was able to move the ball on Oklahoma and the Hawks were doing a good job on defense. Iowa even scored a touchdown that day.

But in the second half, the quality of the Oklahoma team came through with a 21-6 victory. I am sure in broadcasting that game I gave every impression that Iowa had scored a moral victory, which in my mind they had.

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The Iowa press corps went down to the Hawkeye dressing room for Hayden Fry's quotes, and Hayden was in no mood to talk about moral victories. Right off the bat he said, "We came down here to win, not to just play a competitive game."

He was pressed on several sides from different writers about the fact that Iowa's players should be happy with their performance against such a highly rated foe. Certainly Switzer knew that Oklahoma had been in a tough game.

But in the end, being the psychologist that he was, Hayden took the other tactic that the Hawks are expected to win and expected to play well and this game was an "L," no matter how you cut it.

The cowboy from Texas against the Sooners that day established the Iowa program. And off that foundation, in short order, came the Rose Bowls and the championships.

With what has happened in the Iowa camp this week with Marcus Coker suspended, it puts the Hawks in a position of the same mindset that Hayden had on that day. And I expect the Hawks to play extremely well against Bob Stoops' Oklahoma Sooners, just as they did in 1979 against Switzer and his gang.

And from yours truly to all good sports out there, Happy Holidays.