

# The Broncos know exactly what they're getting in Iowa's Josey Jewell

By Marc Morehouse  
DenverBroncos.com  
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Face it, it's just going to be a little weird with Josey Jewell not playing linebacker for the Hawkeyes this fall.

Jewell started at middle linebacker for the last three years at Iowa. He finished his redshirt freshman season in 2014 with starts in the final four games.

This is a rough estimate, but Jewell logged something in the neighborhood of 3,330 snaps during his Iowa career. Maybe add another 100 for special teams.

That's what Denver is going to get.

Jewell was picked No. 106 on Saturday afternoon by the Denver Broncos. According to [spotrac.com](#), this should net Jewell an entry deal of a three-year contract worth \$3.1 million with a signing bonus of just more than \$700,000.

Tackling isn't a simple art. A lot of football fans take that for granted. Think about it. Your job is wrestling one of the fastest and strongest humans on the planet and putting them on the ground. While some giant O-lineman is holding you. Probably holding you, depending on your perspective.

That's what Jewell does best. The Decorah native was one of the best pure tacklers in Iowa history. Jewell finished his career ranked fourth in tackles at Iowa with 437.

He led the Big Ten in tackles (136) and ranked fourth nationally in tackles per game (11.3). The 136 tackles last season tied for 12th-best single season total at Iowa. Jewell was one of three Hawkeyes ever to record over 115 tackles in three different seasons. Jewell put up 22 career games with 10 or more tackles, including nine games in 2017. He ranked second in the Big Ten in tackles in 2016 with 124 after leading the Big Ten in 2015.

Guess what? During this whole draft evaluation process tackling is the one thing NFL scouts haven't been able to see Jewell do live.

So yeah, the underwear Olympics have been weird for him. Did he recover from running a 4.82-second 40-yard dash at the combine in February?

"Yes, I recovered," Jewell said with a laugh. "I'm all right. I'll live through it, so it's good."

The combine for Jewell was a little like a trip to the doctor. There's always going to be something, no matter how much you skipped pizza.

“A lot of people put stress on the 40, which, really is running in a straight line,” Jewell said. “I’m not sure how much you actually do that on a football field. I just tried to do my best.”

Jewell came back with a 4.68 during his pro day at Iowa. Still, Jewell and the 40 is like using a 2018 loaded Tundra for a golf cart. That vehicle was made for the physical part of the game.

Conversely, Jewell ran a 6.8-second three-cone drill at the combine. That’s a drill aimed to measure short-area quickness. That 6.8 seconds puts Jewell among the elite at the linebacker position.

Why does this measure make more sense for a linebacker?

“That’s change of direction, that’s what you’re going to do as a linebacker,” Jewell said. “You’re going to be in the box. You’re going to have to make quick changes of direction, move around linemen and catch running backs.”

In 2017, Jewell was named the Associated Press Big Ten defensive player of the year, first-team all-Big Ten and won the 2017 Lott Impact Trophy.

With Jewell, one simple question at the combine kind of unlocked everything you need to know about the Decorah native. Jewell was asked how he gets to the ball.

“I definitely think it’s a lot of instinct and I also think it’s a lot of film preparation, watching a lot of film with coach, a lot of film with other players,” Jewell said. “Just understanding each scenario or each formation, what they can run and from there just understanding from there what their job is and how you can effectively do it.”

After something in the neighborhood of 3,300 snaps as a college football player, Jewell is a freshman again. This time, yes, he is getting paid.

Still, probably no Hawkeye is better equipped to go through the NFL proving ground and come out of it with his eyes where they need to be.

At one point, Jewell was asked if he would feel comfortable living in a big city.

“There’s one guy from New York who asked me about it quite a bit, how I would adjust, if I can adjust,” Jewell said. “And the answer to that is yeah. I mean I adjusted from a small town to a little bigger — Iowa City’s still small — so I mean just maturing that way. And I think I’ll be able to take that next step. I know I’ll be able to take that next step and be able to go to a big city and just focus on football. That’s what it’s going to be.”

# How they fit: Broncos' Day 3 picks

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

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Pick No. 106 (fourth round): Iowa linebacker Josey Jewell

There's nothing wrong with mastering the basics.

And man, has Josey Jewell sure mastered them at linebacker.

The Iowa product was among the surest tacklers in the nation while at Iowa, and he racked up the fourth-most tackles in Hawkeye history.

Twenty-two times in his career, Jewell recorded more than 10 tackles in a game. He finished with the most tackles of any Big Ten player in 2017 and has the fifth-most career tackles of any Big Ten player since 2005.

That alone makes him a positive addition to the Broncos' linebacking corps, which already includes Brandon Marshall and Todd Davis. Pro Football Focus has long identified Davis among the NFL's linebackers with the fewest missed tackles.

Following the departure of Corey Nelson to the Eagles, though, the Broncos needed to fill a void.

Jewell does just that, and what he lacks in speed — he ran a 4.82-second 40-yard dash at the Combine — he makes up for in football intelligence.

"A lot of that is instincts," said Jewell when explaining how he is able to overcome that challenge. "A lot of film watching for me. Being able to get in there with my teammates and watch extra film. I watch extra film with assistant coaches being there with us. We are in there trying to understand offenses as much as we can, understand what formations that they run certain plays to pass out of and certain three-step drops and stuff like that. There is a lot of film stuff going in to it.

"It really helped me because I did not run the fastest time ever — not even close. I had to be able to make up from somewhere else. "

Jewell could also make an instant contribution on special teams.

# Josey Jewell selected by Denver Broncos in fourth round of NFL draft

By Gina Mizell  
The Denver Post  
April 28, 2018

The Denver Broncos began the final day of the NFL draft by selecting Iowa linebacker Josey Jewell in the fourth round (106th overall).

Jewell was a first-team All-American last season after racking up 136 tackles (13.5 for loss), 4.5 sacks two interceptions, 11 pass breakups, one forced fumble and one fumble recovery.

Denver's other selections thus far: North Carolina State defensive end Bradley Chubb with the fifth overall pick, SMU receiver Courtland Sutton in the second round (40th overall) and Oregon running back Royce Freeman (71st overall) and Boston College cornerback Isaac Yiadom (99th overall) in the third round.

The Broncos have another pick in the fourth round (113th overall) and two selections in the fifth round (149th and 160th overall). Barring trades, Denver does not have a pick in the sixth or seventh round.

## About Josey Jewell

Size: 6-foot-2, 236 pounds

College: Iowa

Age: 23

## Three things to know

- Jewell earned Big Ten defensive player of the year honors as a senior and started 37 consecutive games over the last four seasons.
- Jewell was an unheralded high school recruit from Decorah, Iowa, who initially committed to play football at Division III Luther College.
- Jewell tallied 22 career games with 10 or more tackles and ranks fourth in Iowa history for career tackles (437).

## Scouting report

Strengths: Eyes work fast. ... Initial play diagnose and trigger to the ball is immediate. ... Film junkie who recognizes blocking schemes and adjusts accordingly. ... Always flowing downhill looking to make plays near line of scrimmage.

Weaknesses: Does not possess desired NFL speed and lacks long limbs and loose frame. ... Lateral agility, change of direction and overall reactive athleticism is just average. ... Has some straight line speed but his short area foot quickness in mirroring play is nothing special.

# Iowa football's Josey Jewell, Akrum Wadley continue parallel journey to NFL dreams

By Scott Dochterman

Landof10.com

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Linebacker Josey Jewell and running back Akrum Wadley were unheralded recruits who announced their commitment to Iowa football on the exact same day.

It was Feb. 4, 2013, just two days before National Signing Day. Wadley was a 2-star running back from Newark, N.J., who picked the Hawkeyes over Temple. Jewell was a state championship running back from Decorah, Iowa, who nearly opted for Division III Luther College until the Hawkeyes ponied up with a scholarship offer. Jewell also was a 2-star product.

Both players finished their Iowa careers with near-equal impact on opposite sides of the ball. Now, they'll know their NFL destinations on the same day as well.

Neither Jewell nor Wadley were selected on the NFL draft's second day, which consisted of the second and third rounds. Two other Hawkeyes — center James Daniels (Chicago) and cornerback Josh Jackson (Green Bay) — were chosen in the second round. The draft concludes Saturday with rounds four through seven.

Jewell was a unanimous first-team All-American and the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year last year but that doesn't mean much in the draft process. NFL teams have picked 10 linebackers so far, none of whom could match Jewell's production, let alone his leadership skills. He presented his intangibles to officials at the NFL combine.

"I just talk a little bit about productivity, dependability and then leadership," Jewell said. "And just try to explain to them through the past three years [being a captain] and just go with the leadership on that part. Just to understand that the Mike [linebacker] is supposed to be the leader on the team and hopefully they understand I can be a leader coming off to an NFL team."

Wadley's inauspicious early years were filled with fumbles on and off the field. He was a regular in coach Kirk Ferentz's doghouse before growing out of it. Wadley's 204-yard, 4-touchdown performance off the bench at Northwestern in 2015 set in motion one of Iowa's great careers. He finished with 35 touchdowns, just 1 shy of Tavian Banks' record. Wadley rushed for 2,872 career yards to rank fifth all time at Iowa. His 3,904 all-purpose yards are ninth and he's one of only four Hawkeyes to rush for 1,000 yards in consecutive seasons.

Along with informal meetings at the NFL combine, Wadley had workouts with the New York Giants, New York Jets and Dallas Cowboys. For NFL suitors, Wadley fits as a sub-package runner and perhaps a special teams performer. Already, eight running backs have been chosen ahead of him.

"I always like to say my vision, quick feet," said Wadley about his assets. "My ability to make defenders miss in the open field. I've got really good hands out of the backfield. Tough. I can go in between tackles, I can go outside. Everything. I don't ever stop talking."

Jewell was projected somewhere between the second and fourth rounds, while Wadley always appeared destined for the draft's third day. They'll be joined as Saturday NFL draft picks by Iowa guard Sean Welsh and possibly other teammates such as offensive linemen Ike Boettger and Boone Myers and linebacker Ben Niemann. Others will agree to terms as undrafted free agents.

It seems appropriate that Jewell and Wadley agreed to become Iowa Hawkeyes on the same day and will become professional football players on the same day five years later. Their first step toward reaching their NFL dreams is just hours away. But their impact at Iowa is immeasurable.

# Iowa's Josey Jewell sees ball, gets ball

By Marc Morehouse  
The Gazette  
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Saquon Barkley won the game. He did, and Penn State did, too. There's no getting around that.

Josey Jewell wrestled this bear with everything he had, and so did all of the Hawkeyes. Time and time again last Saturday night, there was Barkley and then there was Jewell. Sometimes, vice versa. Sometimes, there they were at the same time.

For Iowa (3-1, 0-1 Big Ten) to have any chance against a sterling athlete like Barkley, or most of everyone else left on the Hawkeyes' schedule, starting this weekend with Michigan State (2-1, 0-0), the team defensive concepts need to be sewn into the players.

As you can see, Jewell, Iowa's middle linebacker and the central nervous system of the defense, takes this to heart.

"He's one of the top linebackers in the country," Iowa linebacker Ben Niemann said. "Just getting to compete with him every day and try to play to the standard that he has, that's definitely a good thing."

Iowa didn't win. Jewell would not want this to be a celebration. He matched his career high with 16 tackles, including 11 solo stops and 3.0 tackles for loss. He also had his fifth career interception, with his 33-yard return leading to Iowa's first touchdown of the game. He recovered a fumble in the second half and finished the game with two pass breakups.

Iowa didn't win. Jewell would not want this to be happy, happy fun time. That's not the way he's made. Just going off the conference and national awards that have come his way this week, maybe even he might be able to appreciate what he did to keep the Hawkeyes alive against the No. 4 Nittany Lions.

"That's cool stuff," he said. "I'd rather just win the game. That stuff is kind of secondary."

Told you.

Still, this doesn't happen a lot for Iowa football, so let's roll call: On Monday morning, Jewell was named the Big Ten's co-defensive player of the week. It was Jewell's second one of those this year and third of his career.

On Tuesday, a pair of national awards came his way. Jewell was named the Bednarik Award player of the week and the FWAA/Bronko Nagurski national defensive player of the week.

Jewell was one of six Iowa defenders who logged 100 plays from scrimmage against Penn State. The Hawkeyes' defense was on the field for 39:39 and still allowed just 19 points and two touchdowns in five PSU trips inside Iowa's 20-yard line.

"The film study during the week," Niemann said when asked what Jewell does behind the scenes to sharpen his skills. "He's really just thinking of any possibility he can get out there on the field. The

leadership he has, the work in the weight room, the whole offseason, all of that goes in and shows up on game day. He does a lot of extra things.”

Let’s focus on the film thing. Jewell played prep football at Decorah High School, a program with a healthy attitude toward the value of studying video of your opponent.

Even Jewell admits there was a learning curve when it came to film study on this level.

“Our coaches in the past have taught us how to watch tape, what to take away and what exactly we’re watching,” Jewell said. “The offensive guards, how the backfield is set, a lot of alignment stuff.”

Jewell said he’s leaned on the distillation of his experience at Iowa. When he was a freshman, the Hawkeyes had Anthony Hitchens, Christian Kirksey and James Morris, three high-performing linebackers who played in the NFL. He also credited former Iowa linebackers Travis Perry and Cole Fisher. He credited former Iowa linebackers coach Jim Reid, who’s now defensive coordinator at Boston College. Of course, he credited current linebackers coach Seth Wallace.

All that helps him gain a step or three on the field.

“If you want to be able to move quick and not be thinking at all when you’re out there or maybe just think for a split second and then just go, you’re going to have to watch a lot of tape,” Jewell said. “You have to understand what kind of plays they can run in different situations, different formations. You have to watch quite a bit of film to not think that much. If you don’t watch a lot of film, you might be thinking a little bit more and you might be slower on your reads.”

How players learn and how they view the game is yet another variable coaches need to measure and know about their players. Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said all Iowa players have an iPad. The video staff can compile just about any compilation of opponent video from myriad situations.

Ferentz prefers players study video together.

“There still is something unique about sitting in the room with your teammates,” Ferentz said. “It’s better if the coach is in there, but when the team gets in there, they sit there and talk to each other, teach each other. That’s a good thing. When you get that going, you’re in business.”

Think Iowa’s defense gets that out of Jewell? And maybe a little something else?

“It’s his competitive spirit,” defensive end Parker Hesse said. “It’s just his will to win. He doesn’t lose at any cost.”

# Iowa LB Josey Jewell off to monster start in '17

By Associated Press STAFF

Associated Press

September 26, 2017

When Iowa defensive lineman Parker Hesse calls his teammate Josey Jewell "obnoxiously competitive," he means it as a compliment.

Hesse said Jewell's tenacity even extends to a tailgating game, cornhole, which was pretty much designed to be played with a drink in one hand and a beanbag in the other. But Hesse said Jewell is one of the best he's ever seen at it because of the over-the-top focus Jewell brings to every toss — even reciting the score at each turn.

"It's his competitive spirit. It's just his will to win," Hesse said. "He doesn't lose at any cost."

That intensity has helped make Jewell, once an overlooked high schooler from Decorah, Iowa, one of the nation's best linebackers. And he's been at his best as a senior.

Jewell, a preseason first-team All-American and the Big Ten's leader in tackles this fall, put together one of the best box score lines in school history in last weekend's heartbreaking 21-19 loss to No. 4 Penn State.

Jewell had 16 tackles, three of them for losses, along with two pass breakups, a fumble recovery and an interception he returned 33 yards to set up Iowa's first touchdown.

Jewell's production is a product of his frenetic playing style, which has inspired teammates ever since he forced his way into the starting lineup as a freshman.

Jewell and the Hawkeyes (3-1, 0-1) travel to face Michigan State (2-1, 0-0) on Saturday.

"It definitely takes a lot of stress off you, as a defense, just to have a guy like that who's a middle linebacker who runs the defense. It's his defense," cornerback Josh Jackson said. "It's good to have someone with his tenacity, his grit, running to the ball the way he did (against Penn State)...we just try to use his energy to take the stress off of us."

Jewell had no other FBS offers coming out of Decorah, but assistant Reese Morgan saw his potential. Jewell turned out to be much better than even Iowa's coaches expected — earning all-league honors as a sophomore and junior — and his vision combined with a commitment to film study are two major reasons why.

According to linebacker Ben Niemann, Jewell is an expert at using film to prepare for game-day scenarios, allowing him to play much faster on Saturday than he might test out in offseason evaluations.

Jewell's knowledge, vision and athleticism were especially evident on his interception against the Nittany Lions.

Jewell dropped into coverage, read quarterback Trace McSorley's eyes perfectly, saw that McSorley would be pressured by a blind-side blitz and was so prepared for a return after making the pick that he nearly brought it back for a touchdown.

"Some players just have that (vision) and Josey has had that knack, plus he's got that inner drive that you can't measure at a combine," Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz said. "That's probably why we almost blew it in recruiting him. We weren't seeing it ... but Josey's got that factor to him.

Jewell has been the lynchpin for a trio of linebackers, including Niemann and Bower, who've led the program to wins in 23 of its last 31 games. But they're all seniors, and Jewell has shown so far that he plans to make his last season in Iowa City his finest.

"Any play could be your last play. So play like it is your last play, always give 100 percent. I don't think that's really changed," Jewell said. "But you definitely know that the end is coming near, and it kind of sucks. But you don't want to regret anything in life, so keep on going 100 percent."

# Josey Jewell is, well, a jewel

By Mike Hlas

The Gazette

September 2, 2017

"Preseason first-team All-America linebacker" doesn't quite leap off the page and into the national football discussion like "possible Top 5 NFL draft pick/quarterback."

Wyoming QB Josh Allen will put Kinnick Stadium in his rearview mirror and never look back. He's got it, "it" being the kind of talent that should take him many miles and millions of NFL dollars from Laramie next spring.

But on a September day in Iowa, Allen was enclosed by Iowa linebacker Josey Jewell and a cast of defenders who held him to a puny 4.4 yards per pass attempt. Thus, the Cowboys were on the very short end of the 24-3 score in Saturday's season-opener for both.

The Hawkeyes' defense was an 11-man deal for 60 minutes, beautiful math for defensive coordinator Phil Parker.

"I think that front seven is as talented collectively as what I've seen in a long time," Cowboys Coach Craig Bohl said. "It hearkens back to some defenses I was around."

He was linebackers coach at Nebraska from 1995-2002, and the Huskers' defensive coordinator the last three of those years. That covers six teams that finished first in the Big 8/Big 12 and one that was a national champion.

High praise, prodded by the poor second his superb quarterback finished against the team with the preseason first-team All-America linebacker, Jewell.

One play dramatically and permanently changed the course of this game. It involved Jewell pursuing Allen like a coyote chasing a rabbit.

Down 7-3, Wyoming sacked Iowa quarterback Nate Stanley and forced the ball from him at the Hawkeyes' 43-yard line with 50 seconds left in the first half. What looked like a gnarly finish to the half for Iowa at that moment became the opposite when it blitzed Allen on the Cowboys' first play of their subsequent possession.

Unblocked, Jewell chased Allen backward, backward, backward. Allen is a good running quarterback, but couldn't elude Jewell. Finally, from the Wyoming 39, Allen halfheartedly flipped the ball out of bounds. It was a basic white flag, which produced an official's yellow flag, because the "pass" traveled nowhere near the line of scrimmage.

The intentional grounding penalty was assessed at the spot of the foul, and the 2nd-and-29 was a bad rabbit hole for the Cowboys.

“That was huge,” Allen said. “We missed a free man on the backside and I rolled out. I thought maybe I could get around him, but I just didn’t have enough time to turn around and throw it away. That was a bonehead decision on my part.”

“That was an interesting play,” Jewell said with typical understatement.

“He’s a fast guy, so it’s kind of hard to contain him. Just keep on running after him and hope that something will happen.”

It was more than hope.

Iowa saved some clock with two timeouts. Then, Wyoming butchered a punt as badly as you’ve seen a punt butchered in the history of punt-butchery, giving Iowa the ball at its foe’s 32. Stanley threw a 27-yard touchdown laser to Noah Fant with: 22 left in the half for a 14-3 lead.

It began with Jewell running down Allen.

“(Jewell) is a great leader,” said fellow Hawkeye linebacker Ben Niemann, who was pretty great himself Saturday. “He plays hard and he’s a smart guy, so he gets us in sets we need to be in up front. I love playing with him.”

The other Iowa senior linebacker, Bo Bower, said “We’ve been through everything together. Josey and I for five years, and Ben played as a true freshman, so the last four years with him. It’s just a family. I know I can count on those guys and they can count on me.”

Jewell is appropriately named. What does he lack at the college level? Not knowledge, skills, instincts, physicality or leadership. He’s a jewel.

“A lot of NFL folks here at the game today,” Iowa Coach Kirk Ferentz said, “and I think they were looking at (Allen), not anybody on our team.”

Um, don’t make bank on that. Pro scouts have pretty good eyesight. They’ll be at the rest of Iowa’s games, and not just to see opposing quarterbacks.

# Iowa LB Josey Jewell named Walter Camp Defensive Player of the Week

By Ryan Connors

Landof10.com

September 3, 2017

Iowa LB Josey Jewell was named a Walter Camp National Player of the Week along with Missouri QB Drew Lock for Week 1.

Jewell registered 14 tackles and two sacks in the Hawkeyes' season opener against Wyoming on Saturday, both of which led the team. He was one of 10 players in the country to record multiple sacks in college football's opening weekend.

Head coach Kirk Ferentz singled him out after the game:

He's a pretty good player. Maybe some of those guys were watching him too. I've encouraged them to. But he's just got something about him, the way he plays, the tempo he plays at. We weren't geniuses. We barely almost blew that whole thing recruitment-wise, but from the day he's walked on campus here, he's just played at a certain tempo. That's how guys like that help the whole team elevate their play, and that's priceless.

Lock threw for 521 yards and 7 touchdowns in Missouri's 72-43 explosion against Missouri State.

# As accolades roll in, slights still fuel Iowa linebacker Josey Jewell; plus Big Ten picks

By Lee Barfknecht  
Omaha World Herald  
September 1, 2017

In 2013, Josey Jewell was a week away from committing to Division III Luther College — though FCS Northern Iowa came in late with a promise to pay for his books.

Then Iowa appeared a few days before the signing deadline with a full ride, and Jewell's dream since seventh grade of playing for the Hawkeyes came true.

Jewell hasn't wasted his opportunity. In his five seasons in Iowa City, he has gone from a punching bag on the scout team to a 6-foot-2, 235-pound preseason first-team All-American.

Jewell is coming off a season in which he finished second in the Big Ten with 124 tackles and was one of five finalists for the Butkus Award, which goes to the nation's top linebacker.

In a recent interview ahead of Iowa's opener at 11 a.m. Saturday against Wyoming, Jewell discussed his transformation as a player, what motivates him and whether Nebraska has become a rival:

Q: What did you weigh when you arrived at Iowa, and how did strength coach Chris Doyle impact your growth?

A: "I was 195 pounds when I came in right off baseball season. Somehow, Coach Doyle and the conditioning staff put a bunch of weight on me and made me faster. It's crazy what they can do at Iowa. I wouldn't be even close to where I am without him and Coach Ferentz.

"A developmental program can really improve their players. Sometimes they won't get the five-stars and four-stars, but those three- and two-star guys want to work. At Iowa, you will get the highest potential you can possibly get."

Q: Kirk Ferentz, 62, now is the longest tenured coach in the FBS, entering his 19th season. Have you seen his enthusiasm wane at all?

A: "He's an amazing guy. He leads by example and does all the little things right. I don't think there's a period where he has decreased interest. He's kept that fire burning. He's not going to let the team down."

Q: You mentioned getting knocked down a lot as a scout-team player in 2013, and that Ferentz let you know about it. How did you react to that?

A: "It was rough, but it was a good kind of rough. He stayed on me and made me accountable. He's shaped me into the person I am today."

Q: Some guys deny they play with a chip on their shoulder, but you openly embrace it. Why?

A: "I try to use some negativity with the way I play. It's how my dad taught me to look at things when I was younger. You don't want to get too caught up in the positive. You want to look at the bad stuff so you can know how much better you can be.

"You don't want to dwell on the negative, but you want to use those negatives to make yourself a better person."

Q: After Iowa beat Nebraska last year 40-10, then-NU defensive coordinator Mark Banker marveled at the Hawkeyes' toughness and said their practices must be "bloodbaths." What did you make of those remarks?

A: "That's cool to hear. I don't know about the bloodbath thing. We try to have physical practices and go all out. We don't want to go 80 percent or not hit each other hard. We practice pretty dang hard every day. If you're sore, it doesn't matter — you're going to keep on hitting people.

"Tough, smart and physical. That's what we live by. It gives us an advantage."

Q: What about the series with Nebraska? Is it a rivalry?

A: "It's always been a tough game. It's an ending game. Either you're undefeated or you've had a bad season and want to get to a bowl game. So it's pretty important.

"We've gone back and forth the past five years. That calls for a rivalry. If you beat the crap out of a team five times or 10 times in a row, it might not be a rivalry. But with them, it is a rivalry. A lot of games in the Big Ten are pretty much rivalries."

To make the Nebraska game at season's end as meaningful as possible, Iowa doesn't want to slip up Saturday against Wyoming. The Cowboys are coached by former Nebraska assistant Craig Bohl, who made a habit of upsetting FBS opponents while head coach at North Dakota State.

Wyoming quarterback and likely first-round draft pick Josh Allen will test Iowa's young secondary, but the Hawkeyes' strength in both lines should prevail.

My pick: Iowa 28, Wyoming 14

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Arkansas State at Nebraska, 7 p.m., BTN: All eyes will be on Husker quarterback Tanner Lee and defensive coordinator Bob Diaco. Like Danny Nee used to say, let's see how they do when the lights are on and the popcorn's popping.

Nebraska 35, Arkansas State 16

Ball State at Illinois, 11 a.m., BTN: The roster at Illinois is stunningly young. Of the 101 players, there are only nine seniors and 16 juniors. That makes the margin for error in any game quite slim.

