

NEW FACES, SAME FEUD

Michigan-Ohio State.

It's a bit different this year, not only because of new head coaches on each side. There's also a chance of a rematch in the Big Ten championship game, one week after the regular-season meeting.

What hasn't changed is the intensity.

Michigan coach Brady Hoke referred to the Buckeyes several times as "Ohio." Not Ohio State, just Ohio.

Outside the Michigan locker room, a red-and-white sign shows the number of days since the Wolverines' last win over the Buckeyes (it's now more than 2,800). In the Ohio State locker room, there's a second countdown to the Michigan game.

Said OSU linebacker Andrew Sweat: "There's not a day that goes by that we don't think about Michigan."

QUOTE HIM

"I have yet to watch one snap of last year's games. If you're a police officer trying to catch me, you're going to have to chase me a while because I'm not looking in the rearview mirror. I'm looking forward." — **Kevin Wilson**

"I don't think we're rebuilding, period. I mean, we're Michigan." — **Brady Hoke**

"If you don't see fast tempo, and you just stand around and sing "Kumbaya" and roasting marshmallows at practice, you're going to struggle playing us. ... We'll play as fast as (officials) will allow us to play." — **Pat Fitzgerald**

"I am 55 now. I had to go into Denny's and look at the back menu." — **Mark Dantonio**



Wisconsin coach Bret Bielema isn't afraid to speak his mind, and he can back his talk up. He has a 49-16 record in his five years with the Badgers.

BLUNT BIELEMA

The Wisconsin head coach Bret Bielema isn't afraid to produce a sound bite. Among them:

"I tell my coaches ... if you are not willing to let a recruit come in and babysit your children when you're not in the house, don't recruit them."

"There is not a coach in this profession that treated me or helped me more than Jim Tressel. He was a guy that grabbed my hand the first time I walked into a meeting, wrote personal notes after games and treated me in a way that was, at the time, overwhelming for me."

"I love to get into a magazine, a newspaper article, Internet article to hear about change of other programs. To me the more you change,

the more you have the opportunity to fail. At Wisconsin we're kind of boring, we do the same thing every day. For us it's been very, very successful."

"If I had a dream world, I would say hammer the guys that don't do things right. When you consciously break an NCAA rule, to me the only way to deter that is to get rid of people, or seriously hold programs accountable."

"To have Nebraska in our league is worth its weight in gold. To be able to open up Big Ten play and have maybe 30,000 to 40,000 Nebraska people coming to Madison, hopefully our guys don't sell tickets to them. I think we're putting in a policy that if anybody sells a ticket to a Nebraska fan, they lose their ticket privileges for three years."

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE BIG TEN

With the conclusion of Big Ten media days, The World-Herald looks back at some memorable occurrences and quotes before NU's first go-around in the new conference.

— **Dirk Chatelain, Sam McKewon, and Jon Nyatawa**

5 SETS OF COUSINS

Kirk Cousins doesn't run like Denard Robinson or scramble like Dan Persa. But the Michigan State quarterback may be the league's best quarterback. Why? Accuracy and intelligence.

Said Spartan safety Trenton Robinson: "He's in the pocket and he'll see something and it's like, 'I can't believe he's about to throw this pass.' He'll throw it and it'll go so fast and so accurate, it's like 'Wow.'"

At the line of scrimmage, Cousins doesn't miss a trick.

"If one person is doing something out of order, Kirk is checking," Robinson said. "He'll be like, 'Cover one, cover one.' He's calling out our plays! He's the smartest quarterback I've played against."

year. Michigan State lost two games in 2010. The bowl game to Alabama. And at Iowa, where Cousins threw a season-high three interceptions.

The Spartans will see the Hawkeyes again in 2011. And again it's in Iowa City. Cousins is glad.

"We want to make amends."

A reporter asked Spartans coach Mark Dantonio a hypothetical question: Would he rather start a season with an experienced quarterback and an inexperienced offensive line, or vice versa.

"I would much rather have an experienced quarterback back," Dantonio said. "I don't think you

can put a price tag on an experienced quarterback. It's about game management. It's so much about leadership out there. It's about having a calming effect on people, delivering the football, making the right decision at the line of scrimmage ...

"Kirk Cousins is all of those things for us. He gives us a great advantage."

Cousins hardly seems like a senior in college. More like a senior fellow at some political think tank. He spoke with authority and brevity to each reporter. He eloquently reflected on the trendy topic of paying college athletes, laying out arguments on each side. And Friday he delivered the keynote player speech at the Big Ten luncheon.

In his speech, he continually hit the word "privilege." The privilege of playing Big Ten football. And the responsibility of acting with integrity and being a role model.

The luncheon crowd of 1,800, including all the head coaches, gave Cousins a standing ovation.

Cousins hasn't seen much of Nebraska's defense. But he got a few pointers at the Elite 11 summer camp from Oklahoma State quarterback Brandon Weeden, who had his moments against the Huskers last year.

Cousins wouldn't divulge much about what Weeden told him, but he did concede that having good wide receivers against the Huskers' secondary — like OSU's Justin Blackmon — helps.

"But we have some pretty good receivers of our own in B.J. Cunningham, Keshawn Martin and Keith Nichol," Cousins said.

Those three combined for 104 catches and 11 touchdowns last



Michigan State quarterback Kirk Cousins may not receive the media attention like Michigan's Denard Robinson or Northwestern's Dan Persa, but the senior threw 20 touchdowns and just 10 interceptions last year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BREAKING IN A NEW SHOELACE

In Rich Rodriguez's spread offense, quarterback Denard "Shoelace" Robinson accumulated 4,272 yards last year, second best in the country.

Yet new Michigan coach Brady Hoke is replacing the spread with a more traditional pro-style offense. Pretty drastic move, right? It's not as bad as it sounds, Hoke said.

"I can tell you, he ran the same offense in high school, which is a plus," Hoke said. "One of the big differences is the mechanics of taking the snap from center, the footwork, the run game, the foot patterns, the play-action game. He was ahead of the curve a little bit."

DON'T FORGET FERENTZ

ESPN analyst Matt Millen was talking to Iowa reporters, who asked him about the possibility of Kirk Ferentz taking over for Joe Paterno at Penn State someday. Millen doesn't buy it.

"If he keeps going the way he's going, he'll have his name on the stadium. I think the world of that guy," Millen said.

"I've recommended (Iowa) a few times, let's put it that way. You think I'm kidding? I think that's as good a place as there is in the country. I think he's as good as it gets."

SHARING SECRETS

Bo Pelini (LSU 2007) and Mark Dantonio (Ohio State 2002) won national titles as defensive coordinators. So it made sense that Dantonio would send his defensive staff to NU in the spring of 2010 to swap information and pointers.

"Good structure, great ideas," Dantonio said of Pelini's two-gap, match-zone defense.

Little did Dantonio know that, a few months later, the team with which he had just shared information would become a Big Ten divisional foe. If he had, Dantonio admitted, he may not have called for the swap.

Pelini, of course, has gained a confidante: Bob Stoops. Pelini has said he'd have more of a chance to share ideas and schemes with his childhood friend now that Nebraska has left the Big 12.

WINNING THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

Kirk Ferentz is trying to replace three defensive linemen who earned promotions to the NFL, most notably Adrian Clayborn. He'll look to Mike Daniels and Broderick Binns to make stops. Beyond that, Ferentz isn't so sure.

"Last year, we played four or five guys during the course of the game," he said. "This year, it's probably realistic we'll be playing six, seven, maybe eight guys in a game."

Mark Dantonio came to Michigan State in 2007. This is the first year that his defensive front is "solid," he said. The Spartans have physical linemen, and plenty of them.

Jerel Worthy, a 310-pound defensive tackle, "should be a phenomenal player," Dantonio said. "Quick-twitch guy. You build around him."

At Northwestern, the specialty is offense. And the key to big numbers isn't just



Although Mike Caputo, No. 58, might be undersized, Jared Crick said, the 6-foot-1, 275-pound Nebraska center makes up for it with his relentlessness.

Dan Persa, it's four returning starters on the offensive line. Combined, returning linemen have started 137 games.

"Ask every coach in the country what's critically important for you to be successful," Pat Fitzgerald said. "It's the trenches. You have to have both sets of lines in place to have two fists in the fight. That's the way I look at it."

Sophomore Andrew Rodriguez has size and strength. Senior Yoshi Hardrick is even bigger. Senior Marcel Jones has excellent technique. But of all the Husker offensive linemen, center Mike Caputo is the toughest one-on-one matchup for a defender. That's according to Jared Crick. Listed at 6-foot-1, 275 pounds, Caputo is undersized but relentless.

"Caputo never gives up, and that's the worst kind of guy," Crick said. "He's not bigger than anybody, he's just got more fight in him."

CLEANER MESS

Ron Zook shares his colleagues' concern about cheating programs. But the Illinois coach said cheaters are far more likely to get caught nowadays. The stricter scrutiny creates a false perception of anarchy.

"Is it worse than it was 20 years ago?" the Fighting Illini coach said. "Hell, no."