

Hawkeye 'Haydenisms': Recalling Hayden Fry's 100 best quotes



By Scott Dochterman May 26, 2020



IOWA CITY, Iowa — If wrestling legend Dan Gable is the greatest coach in Iowa athletics history, longtime football coach Hayden Fry certainly has a case as the school's most important sports figure.

Fry, who died Dec. 17, 2019 at age 90, changed everything about Iowa athletics from the logos and uniforms to the on-field results. He helped design the iconic TigerHawk in 1979 and modeled the uniforms after the Pittsburgh Steelers. In 1981, his third season, Fry took the [Hawkeyes](#) to the Rose Bowl and ended Iowa's 19-year drought of non-winning football.

That season impacted all of college football because it ended the [Ohio State-Michigan](#) headlock on the Rose Bowl. From 1968-80, only the Buckeyes or Wolverines represented the Big Ten in Pasadena. By sitting atop the league standings, Fry forged a new era of Big Ten football.

In doing so, Fry battled league foes with detailed schematics and never was afraid to verbally joust his rivals and peers. Few coaches ever have dispensed the type of rhetoric Fry displayed following games, in midweek news conferences or in side conversations. He was known for lashing out at the media about once a season to deflect pressure away from his team or create storylines if a few players were injured or struggling. Fry had no problem taking on another program or the officials, either.

A master motivator, Fry often played the villain, too. He regularly tossed barbs at Northwestern and Iowa State, teams Iowa had owned winning streaks of 21 and 15 games, respectively. Fry was critical of Camp Randall Stadium, home of a Wisconsin team that did not beat Iowa between 1977 and 1997. Fans of those programs hated Fry as much as he was beloved by Iowa supporters.

Fry's quips over his Iowa tenure were informing, entertaining and often loquacious. From various news conferences published by The Des Moines Register and The Cedar Rapids Gazette, other personal interviews and in his autobiography "A High Porch Picnic," here are 100 of Fry's best quotes.

Fry vs. [Northwestern](#)

No program targeted both Fry and Iowa quite like Northwestern, and it has developed into an intense, competitive rivalry. That was not the case for most of Fry's tenure. The Hawkeyes ripped the [Wildcats](#) the first 16 years under Fry and only twice was the final score within 13 points. When Gary Barnett took over at Northwestern in 1992, he saw [Iowa](#) as a program to both emulate and mark. Their first meeting was like nearly all of the others since 1974, a 56-14 [Iowa](#) win.

After Barnett shook hands with Fry, the [Iowa](#) coach uttered a condescending phrase that motivated the Northwestern coach and invigorated the [Wildcats](#).

1. "I hope we didn't hurt any of your boys," Fry told Barnett. That comment was embellished by Barnett over the years and came to a head in 1995 when the once-downtrodden [Wildcats](#) were leading the Big Ten. They already had upset [Notre Dame](#), [Penn State](#) and Michigan but they saved their angry taunts for [Iowa](#), which by then had won 21 straight in the series. On the Monday of game week, Northwestern players initiated a war of words directed at the [Hawkeyes](#). Instead of downplaying the rhetoric, Fry elevated it in his weekly news conference that Tuesday afternoon.

2. "They've had their rump kicked, and they've made up their minds to bring it to an end. They lead the nation in turnover margin, plus the fact that when they get the ball, they take advantage of it and put points on the board. But as far as having all of those Heisman Trophy guys ... there's not a Simeon Rice, there's not a Kevin Hardy. They've got a running back who's leading the Big Ten (Darnell Autry) but he's certainly not the best running back in America. They've just done what they have had to do in order to win. They've got a brand-new enthusiasm associated with winning."

3. "I would think that after 21 years of being defeated, I would be looking for answers. These are young men; they're feeling their oats. But it's just another game."

4. "It certainly isn't that we've been running up the score intentionally. If we have a comfortable lead, we run it. If people put eight or nine men on the line of scrimmage, we don't have any alternative but to throw the ball because you can't run it. A lot of times, the other team has something to do with how many points you score or don't score."

5. "I'm going to refrain from being the chamber of commerce. To me, until you've actually done something over a period of years, you really haven't established yourself. You're going to have teams jump up and do well from time to time, but that's not the barometer to judge. You need to do it over the long haul. This is a one-year, Cinderella year and that's wonderful. It's great."

6. "I haven't done anything to make them mad, except win. If that makes them mad, then they're mad."

7. "We've always played well against Northwestern and if that alienates them, well, so be it."

8. "After 21 straight (victories), they've still got to show me that they can whip us."

With ESPN College GameDay in town, the Hawkeyes took a 14-3 first-half lead. Northwestern rallied, however, and beat [Iowa](#) 31-20. It was the first of three straight wins by the Wildcats against Fry and the Hawkeyes.

Fry vs. [Minnesota](#)

The Hawkeyes share more history with Minnesota than any other program. They staged their first game in 1891 and for nearly 130 years, the discourse has straddled the line between a firecracker and a stick of dynamite. They play for one of college football's greatest traveling trophies, a 98.3-pound bronze pig named Floyd of Rosedale, which became a peace offering in 1935 to avert a potential riot.

By 1982, the Gophers had beaten Iowa in each of Fry's first three encounters, including their game in Iowa City during the Hawkeyes' 1981 Big Ten championship season. During Iowa week, Minnesota coach "Smokey" Joe Salem wore overalls in practice to dig at the Hawkeyes, while other Twin Cities media personalities were accused of making fun of the Gophers' rivals. So when the Hawkeyes won 21-16 in the Metrodome, Fry told sports information director Phil Haddy to wait a few extra minutes before his postgame interview.

Fry then changed into a pair of overalls, a straw hat and a flannel shirt and stood outside the locker room door and conducted interviews.



9. "These are my Iowa clod clothes. All you great Minnesota writers, radio people and TV ... I didn't want you to look like liars so I've got my clod clothes on."

10. "They told me that I might be from Texas, but that pig is pretty important around here. They said he's been in Minnesota so long that he's probably frozen by now."

11. "We're taking Floyd home where he belongs. Sooooo-cy pig. Sooooo-cy."

Fry was 12-8 against the Hawkeyes' ancient rivals with several lopsided victories and a few rough experiences. In the 1990 regular-season finale with the Metrodome at least half filled with Iowa fans, the Gophers upset Iowa 31-24 to send the Hawkeyes into a four-way for the Big Ten title. The Hawkeyes still earned the Rose Bowl nod with a 3-0 record against the other titlists.

12. "In my opinion, it's the only way it should be because we defeated all those teams on the road, head up," Fry said. "So we're disappointed, and yet we're extremely proud."

13. The rivalry was at the zenith for both programs, and Fry made no bones about not liking the Gophers. "I'm not in favor of dropping them, but if I had to, Minnesota would be my first choice because of the things that have happened over the years."

In 1991, in what was termed as "The Snow Bowl," the Hawkeyes finished the regular season 10-1 with a 23-8 win against the Gophers at Kinnick Stadium. Only about 32,000 fans showed up for a game that included as much as eight inches of snow.

14. Fry often jabbed at his opponents, but he rarely made predictions. That changed that week. The day before the game, Fry told a crowd at the Johnson County I-Club breakfast, "Let's put it this way: We're going to win the football game tomorrow. I'll guarantee you that." After the game, Fry said, "Don't think I didn't wonder, 'Did I really say that? I'd never said that in my life.'"

It was Fry's 100th win at Iowa. He slipped and fell on the snowy, slick grass while talking with counterpart John Gutekunst during pregame drills. Afterward, he accepted a Holiday Bowl bid.

15. After receiving congratulations from Iowa President Hunter Rawlings, Fry said: "I shake hands with this guy, and I've always got to check if I've still got my watch on."

16. "It's just like my wife asked me the other day: 'How many games have you coached altogether?' I said, 'I don't know. I'm afraid to add up all those losses.'"

Fry accepts the Iowa job

Not everything Fry said had a rivalry twinge or angle. In fact, Fry had no real knowledge of Iowa before accepting the job on Dec. 9, 1978. After coaching SMU from 1962-72 and North Texas from 1973-78, Fry was a candidate for several jobs, including Oklahoma State and Ole Miss. But the combination of Iowa's loyal fan base and a highly regarded athletic director in Bump Elliott gave Fry confidence he could build a winner. He was emphatic the school needed to provide enough resources for the program to compete annually in the Big Ten.

17. "I have no time schedule on getting Iowa a winning football team. But I assure you we will be competitive, tough and colorful. If I did not believe Iowa can win in the near future, I would not have left North Texas. We have only one place to go and that's up."

18. "We have to have an equal opportunity. Our stick has to be as long as the sticks being used by those we play."

19. "To say that this will be an easy job would be crazy. A lot of my fellow coaches will probably think I am crazy for leaving the security of North Texas. But I want the opportunity to take a place that is not recognized as a football factory and make it successful. A lot of people like to climb mountains. I like to take football teams and turn them into winners."

20. "We may throw 40 to 50 passes in one game and then come back and only throw 20 in another. I am definitely a passing coach. We may run the Statue of Liberty play out of our own end zone. We may line up with just one man in the backfield."

21. "Those people deserve a winner and we're going to do everything we can to give them a winner. I think it is wonderful that an average of 50,000 people come out to watch Iowa play. But that is not fair to those fans and there is no reason to think they will continue to come if the team does not win."

22. "That is one thing I want my players to understand — there is no free lunch here. My players will hustle and produce for us on the field or I will help them pack. We are going to outwork and outhustle and outcoach other people."

23. "If the other team's defense is going to give us the pass, we'll pass. If they're going to give us the run, we'll run. Every club has a weakness on offense, so our defense puts our strength against that weakness."

24. "It's great to be in Hawkeye Country," Fry said to a basketball crowd a few days later. "I had an opportunity to meet the football team today, and, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to win."

High Porch Picnic

As a West Texas native, Fry regularly came up with homespun descriptions that eventually became clichés throughout Iowa. In fact, most Hawkeye fans older than a certain age will smile when hearing a "Haydenism" during football season.

25. "Scratch where it itches." That's how Fry attacks an opponent's weakness.

26. "Nothing's better than a high-porch picnic right here in California," Fry said after arriving for the Rose Bowl in 1981. A high-porch picnic means the game carries heightened importance.



27. "Plow up some snakes and kill 'em." That was Fry's way of getting rid of old losing streaks.

28. "Only thing I've got going for me are my day dreams." That's when Fry felt he and his team were under attack by media and fans.

29. "We're going to have to put our boots on because it's about to get deep." Fry said this during a weekend back in Iowa City before meeting with old friend and former sports information director George Wine.

30. "I'm still on the right side of the grass." Fry's self-deprecating way of saying he's still alive.

31. "The sun don't shine on the same dog's rump every day." Pretty obvious.

32. "The main thing is, be sure you put me high enough on the foundation that the dogs can't urinate on my shoes," Fry said when the city of Coralville commissioned a statue of his likeness along the Hayden Fry Way.

33. "I didn't think I was going to make it, but I chug a lug of WD-40 this morning so I'm going good." Fry used this description enough to make one wonder if he owned shares of the lubricant that magically crases squeaks.

Starting at Iowa

Fry liked to use a familiar quote of Iowa fans when he and defensive coordinator Bill Brashier watched game film of previous seasons.

34. "Every time Iowa made a first down, the whole crowd erupted. I got to thinking, 'My gosh, what would happen if we ever scored a touchdown?'"

The impression became reality when Fry switched to an empty backfield early in his Iowa debut and the Kinnick Stadium crowd gave him a standing ovation. That type of enthusiasm helped him change the culture of a perennial loser.

35. "It was a group of young men that were very hungry, been kicked around, had a hard time," Fry said on one of his final trips to Iowa City. "To see them win the Big Ten championship was one of the highlights of my career. They hadn't had a winning season in 19 seasons and psychologically, I had a great advantage because they were easy to motivate. They were told they couldn't win, and they were determined to show people that they could."

36. "Once we start winning here, I want to develop an environment where the fans expect us to win," Fry said Sept. 22, 1979. "I want them to get mad if we

don't win. That's the American way of life."



In Fry's second game, the Hawkeyes traveled to No. 3 Oklahoma and lost a hard-fought game, 21-6. Iowa fans who made the trip offered congratulations for the effort, which infuriated the new coach.

37. "I just told my football team that's what's wrong with our ball club," Fry said. "We get our asses kicked and we get complimented. If I see one guy with a smile on his face, I'm gonna bust him right in the mouth."

Even before the 1979 season, Fry combined with Bill Colbert to design the TigerHawk. Fry requested permission from the Steelers to copy their uniforms. He felt if his team looked like champions, they'd feel like winners. It also would give the program a fresh look to its fans.

38. "From where I come from, it's called selling the sizzle before the steak," Fry said.

Cy-Hawk Week

Fry arrived at Iowa just two years after Iowa and Iowa State revived their series following a 43-year break. There was a mixed reception from Iowa fans to the renewal, but through Fry's first four Cy-Hawk meetings, the Cyclones had won three times.

Then, the Hawkeyes peeled off 15 straight victories that turned the in-state rivalry into an annual one-sided affair. In 1996, Fry teed off on the Cyclones as he approached game week.

39. "I remember last year, the president (Martin Jischke) predicted they were going to win," Fry said. "I remember Troy Davis guaranteed a win last year. It kind of gives you an insight how meaningful it is to those people over there."

Did Iowa State's president really say that?

40. "Gosh yes. You don't think ours would say something like that, do you? It's in the writeups. We've got the clippings down here. President Jischke."

41. "I don't blame him. Heck, I think the guy is a heck of a president. He loves athletics; he's behind them over there. He's trying to fire them up. More power to him. I don't hold that against him at all. I'm just re-stating what he actually said."

42. "Can you imagine all the garbage we'd take from you guys and the fans and the Cyclone fans and the president of the university (if Iowa lost)? All those folks would be 50 feet off the ground."

Entering the 1996 matchup, Fry faced his protégé, Dan McCarney, who was in his third season with the Cyclones. Fry was asked to compare some of Iowa State's previous coaches in the process.

43. "I don't know if it's possible to double Jim Walden's efforts. Jim became obsessed with beating us because of all the news media and the fans. I couldn't figure it out."

44. "I thought Jim Walden did a heck of a job against us every year. Some of the scores might not have indicated it, but he was a difficult guy to prepare for, a good coach and their kids played real hard. Now the other fella, he was a little bit easier. (Jim) Criner."

Then came a whiff of condescension that lives with the series nearly a quarter-century later.

45. "I can't say it's more important than a Big Ten game. It's more important than the Tulsa game, but I can't say it's more important than the Arizona game because that was the first game."

Iowa beat Iowa State for the 14th straight year, 38-13, in 1996. The following week, the Hawkeyes flew to [Tulsa](#) on gameday and promptly lost 27-20. That result lingered and led to one of Fry's biggest skirmishes with local media.

Fry vs. the media

Almost every year, Fry would pick a weekly news conference where he'd tee off on local media outlets and create a couple of news stories to deflect attention from his players. As a psychology major in college, Fry used different forms of motivation. He might be loose for a tough opponent or be a taskmaster for a weaker foe. If his team was either banged up or facing outside scrutiny, watch out. Fry was like a wounded raccoon in a garden shed.

After the Tulsa debacle in 1996, Iowa rebounded with a 37-30 win against [Michigan State](#). It pushed Iowa to 3-1 but the mood was surly around the program. When Jim Ecker of The Cedar Rapids Gazette wrote Fry did not return a call after a few spats in the past, the coach turned his news conference into a mid-October Festivus. He started by calling Ecker "a liar," which was untrue.

46. "Hey, Jim, you've done a lot of good things," Fry said. "Don't get me wrong, you've done a lot of good things. But it's like somebody at The Cedar Rapids Gazette said, 'Hey, this is the year, let's get on the Hawks, let's get everything negative, let's write the story, but go back and find out all the things that they didn't do, be critical and all this and that,' and you and Mike (Hlas) just do a takeoff. You think I like doing business with you? You're personally a real nice guy, but I don't like doing business with you."

47. "Why do I take time to explain it to you, or stay afterwards and give you a story when all you're going to do is just stick the knife in us?"

Fry then chewed into the rest of those present.

48. "You guys are crazy. Several of you are really crazy. Others of you are nice people — but still crazy."

49. "I've been coaching for 45 years. I know what I'm doing. You can't do everything in one day. We're not Houdini."

50. "How many of you have had a jockstrap on and have played Big Ten football? How many games did you win? It's kind of like those people sitting up in the stands doing all that booing. How many times have they been out there on the field, getting knocked around and so forth? Zippo, but they're experts. That's their right. You don't hear me griping about it."

Despite the irony in Fry's last sentence, he routinely chided reporters, especially Sports Illustrated. In 1982, the magazine sent a reporter to Iowa City to write about how Iowa had become a powerhouse program in football, men's basketball and wrestling. After its reporter conducted several interviews on campus, the magazine killed the story, which left Fry holding a grudge. In 1990

when No. 13 Iowa was set to face No. 5 Illinois, Fry publicly admonished the magazine.

51. "I had the thrill of telling Sports Illustrated don't come in, because you're not going to get any interviews," Fry said. "I've been waiting a long time to be able to do that. They've been extremely negative toward intercollegiate athletics overall. They're all the time jumping on different schools and players and coaches. They're so negative. They blow up things."

In the same 1996 news conference when he lambasted Ecker, Fry also went after people who picked his team to win the Big Ten. He believed it put too much pressure on his squad.

52. "First of all, those people are complete idiots," Fry said about anyone who picked Iowa to win the Big Ten in 1996. "They prove it every year. Some writer in New York City — New York City — or someplace else writes that garbage and you believe it."

The 1996 squad finished 9-3 overall and 6-2 in Big Ten play, just one game behind Ohio State and Northwestern.

53. After people made fun of Iowa's "Think Big" marketing campaign. "What are we supposed to do, put 'Think Little?' 'Think Small?'"

54. Before Iowa's 1995 game against Wisconsin, Fry blasted the postgame call-in show on flagship radio station WHO. "I don't listen to a damn one of them. No sir, I don't, but I've got friends who do."

Fry vs. [Indiana](#)/[Wisconsin](#)

Fry's tactics rarely backfired. After blasting Ecker, Fry's squad went to Indiana and won 31-10. After ranting against negative callers, Fry beat Wisconsin 33-20. It happened countless times over Fry's 20-year career at [Iowa](#).

The week of the 1996 Indiana game, Fry went on a perplexing diatribe against the game environment at Memorial Stadium, a place that rarely features anything close to a sellout.

55. Fry called Indiana's fans and Memorial Stadium, "the worst in the Big Ten Conference for us."

56. Regarding a 1993 trip to Bloomington, a 16-10 loss. "It was bad news. We got a bunch of guys hurt on that dadgummed Astroturf. The crowd was hollering four-letter words and throwing stuff. A couple of our coaches got beamed upside the head. It's not a good environment, and I think the world of Bill Mallory. He's done a heck of a job. But I don't care for the rest of it."

57. "When we go on and off the field over there, we hear every four-letter word. It's really bad."

58. "(Assistant coach Gene Jones) grabbed a security guard and said, 'If you don't stop these people from throwing stuff at us, I'm going to go up there and kick some rump.' I thought that was pretty funny because I would have lost a coach."



1983 Iowa coaching staff. Back row, from left: Bill Snyder, Del Miller, Kirk Ferentz, head coach Hayden Fry, Carl Jackson, Don Patterson, Bill Dervich. Front row, from left: Bernie Wyatt, Barry Alvarez, Bill Brashier, Dan McCartney, Bob Stoops. (Photo: Iowa Athletics)

Fry used some of the same descriptions about Wisconsin, the closest Big Ten campus in proximity to Iowa. In the 1980s, the Hawkeyes would drive multiple buses to Madison and different small Wisconsin towns would set up road blocks, post signs and blast horns as the Hawkeyes drove along Highway 151. The scene at Camp Randall Stadium, Fry said, was just as interesting.

59. "It was really bad — big-time bad — at Wisconsin," Fry said in 1996. "But now it's cleaned up at Wisconsin. We've been treated well at Wisconsin."

60. Wisconsin fans "threw rotten eggs, tomatoes and everything else. They were pouring Schnapps on us. My wife made the mistake of driving up there, and they slashed her tires and tied the radio antenna into a knot."

61. "It's extremely important to try to take the crowd out of the game there, more so than any other place in the world. It's the worst place to play football."

62. "One time, I heard the fans yelling, turned around, and they were passing a keg up through the stands. The next time I turned around, I thought the same thing was happening, but instead it was a young girl they were passing up toward the top. They were handing her row to row. The folks up there don't really care too much about the game. They just have a good time."

Fry on the 1981 season

Perhaps no season in Iowa annals was more magical than the Hawkeyes' 1981 co-Big Ten championship. The Hawkeyes hadn't had a winning season since 1961, and they killed plenty of snakes that year.

It started with a 10-7 upset of No. 7 Nebraska. Iowa also beat No. 6 UCLA and No. 6-ranked defending Big Ten champion Michigan 9-7.

63. "Man, that was one great football game," Fry said winning at Ann Arbor. "I thought I fouled up a jillion times by playing it too close to the vest. But we put a lot of faith in our defense."

64. "Nobody expected us to win this football game except those guys over there in the next room. Nobody's heard of Iowa football for 20 years."

After losing consecutive games in early October, the Hawkeyes finally clinched a winning season with a 33-7 win against Purdue. The Boilermakers had beaten Iowa 20 straight years, then the longest streak in Big Ten history. The previous season, Purdue blasted Iowa 58-13.

65. "Waaa-hooo," Fry yelled when he met with reporters after beating Purdue in 1981. "Twenty cotton-picking years, and we finally did it. We had a great opportunity to fold our tent for the season after last week (a loss to Illinois) and we didn't do it."

In the regular-season finale, Iowa played host to Michigan State with an outside shot at the Rose Bowl. If Ohio State beat Michigan, then the Hawkeyes would tie the Buckeyes (they didn't play) for the Big Ten title and Iowa would qualify for Pasadena. Otherwise, the Hawkeyes were headed to the Liberty Bowl. The annual Michigan-Ohio State rivalry kicked off an hour earlier than the Iowa-Michigan State game.

Fry admitted he asked people in the crowd for scores during the game. Once the Buckeyes pulled off a 14-9 victory, all Iowa needed to do was win.

66. "We could hear our crowd roar every once in a while, but I didn't know if all the drunks had got together or what," Fry said.

With university officials tossing roses from the press box throughout the fourth quarter, the Hawkeyes won 36-7. Fry joined all Iowa fans in universal elation.

67. "I don't care who we play in the Rose Bowl. Shoot, a monkey. I'd go out to Pasadena tomorrow if they'd let me."

68. "We're the chosen people. I'm no preacher, but I want to thank the Lord for giving me the privilege of being associated with this group of fine young men."

69. "I guess you can tell Mr. (Bo) Schembechler that there was another game in the Big Ten today. I read my team what he said about it coming down to the same old story of Michigan and Ohio State being the Big Two and fighting for the Rose Bowl again."

Iowa vs. Michigan

From 1980 through 1992, Iowa-Michigan impacted the Big Ten race more often than the Wolverines-Buckeyes. During that 13-year period, Michigan qualified for seven Rose Bowls while the Hawkeyes earned three trips to Pasadena. No other Big Ten team had more than one Rose Bowl appearance during that span.

Six games between the foes were decided by three points or fewer, including one tie. Five games determined the Rose Bowl representative. The most important game took place in 1985 when No. 1 Iowa faced No. 2 Michigan at Kinnick Stadium. It was the first time in Big Ten history the nation's top two teams squared off in the regular season. It since has happened just one other time in league play (2006 when No. 1 Ohio State defeated No. 2 Michigan at Ohio Stadium).

70. "We were No. 1 and they were No. 2 in the nation. Our guards are snapping the ball, bouncing them over the head of the punter. (Bo Schembechler) walks down and he watches for a while, and I stand there with a straight face with my arms crossed and I don't even look at him. Finally, he says, 'Fry, you're not going to let that guy snap during the game, are you?'

71. "I didn't even look at him and I said, 'Coach Schembechler, we don't plan on punting tonight.' He chased me down the field and gave me a stick of his sugarless gum. I grabbed the whole package and took off. I kept that gum on my desk for years so when spring training arrived, it reminded me of how hard you have to work in order to beat Michigan."

The atmosphere was incredibly loud for the entire game, which caused problems for Michigan quarterback Jim Harbaugh, who frequently complained to officials that he couldn't hear. In one case, it helped the Wolverines produce the game's only touchdown.

72. "It was obvious Harbaugh could hear," Fry said. "He was standing there, reading our goal-line defense. He was audibilizing at the line."

Ultimately, Iowa kicker Rob Houghtlin drilled a 29-yard field goal on the game's final play to lift the Hawkeyes to a 12-10 win.

73. "There's no doubt this was my biggest win at Iowa. I'm even going to vote us No. 1 in the UPI (Coaches) poll."

74. "Afterward, I told (Schembechler) he had a great team. He said, 'But you have the greatest.' That was quite a compliment from Bo."

In 1991, the Wolverines handed Iowa its only loss in what served as a de facto Big Ten title game. It earned some revenge for the Hawkeyes' 24-23 victory in 1990 that sent the Hawkeyes to the Rose Bowl when the teams tied for the league championship.

75. "Can you believe it?" Fry asked after the 1990 win.

76. "Two wins in the state of Michigan in the same year. Woo-eee! First time ever!"

Coming Up Roses

Fry's 1985 squad not only was his best, it was perhaps the greatest in school history. It was ranked No. 1 for five straight weeks until a loss at Ohio State, whose fans tore down the goalposts in celebration. The Hawkeyes still won the Big Ten outright and earned a Rose Bowl trip.

Iowa's 35-31 rally against Michigan State early in Big Ten play approaches the Michigan victory in Hawkeye lore. The previous season, Iowa went for a 2-point conversion late against the Spartans. Quarterback Chuck Long dove for the goal line but was called short in a one-point loss. This time, the Hawkeyes trailed by three points in the final minute. Out of a Power-I formation, the play call was a dive by running back Ronnie Harmon. Fry instructed Long to keep the ball without telling anyone and bootleg to the right. Long did, and he scored the game-winning touchdown.

77. "That might have been the greatest fake of all-time in college football," Fry said. "I believe I could have scored on that one, and I'm really slow."

78. "Chuck's not all that fast. I noticed he hoisted the ball over his head at the 3- or 4-yard line, and I was about to have a heart attack."

After Iowa toppled Minnesota 31-9 in the regular-season finale, television stations aired the postgame news conference live. At that point, Rose Bowl representatives formally extended Fry an invitation.

79. "I thank you, sir, and we look forward to participating in the Rose Bowl," Fry said. "I guarantee you we'll do a better job than we did the last time."

80. "As of this point, this has to be my No. 1 victory, the finest ever. It's a great day for the state of Iowa, the people of Iowa!"

Iowa sat No. 4 entering the Rose Bowl against UCLA with an outside shot at a national title.

81. "Our remaining goals are a win in the Rose Bowl and the national championship," Fry said. "Each year those goals become a little more realistic. We've learned how to win at Iowa."

Unfortunately for Fry, his program never finished as a Rose Bowl champion. The first appearance ended with a 28-0 loss to Washington. The 45-28 loss to UCLA cost the Hawkeyes at least a No. 2 final ranking. In 1990, Iowa's furious fourth-quarter rally fell short in a 46-34 loss to Washington.

Games and events

In 37 years, Fry compiled a 232-178-10 coaching record. At Iowa, he was 143-89-6 with 96 Big Ten victories. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2003. He etched several memorable victories over the years.

In 1990, with a recruiting scandal involving assistant men's basketball coaches at Iowa and Illinois putting their border feud on Hatfields-McCoys level, the No. 13 Hawkeyes traveled to face the No. 5 Illini. The Hawkeyes built a 35-7 lead early in the second quarter in a 54-28 slaughter.

82. "It was like a whirlwind, wasn't it?" Fry said. "Just chopped 'em up."

83. When asked if he'd ever felt better on a football field, Fry said, "Yeah, when I got a 10-year contract. That's the only thing I can think of that big."

In 1987, Iowa faced fourth-and-23 at the Ohio State 29 with time nearly expired. Quarterback Chuck Hartlieb tossed to tight end Marv Cook, who barely cleared the goal line, for a 29-yard touchdown to cap a 29-27 victory in 1987.

84. "I think I'll just go ahead and retire right now," Fry said afterward.

85. "Anybody listening, if you haven't called in about your bowl, please call in now."

86. In the locker room following a 21-20 win at No. 10 Penn State in 1996, Fry bellowed, "This is Happy Hawkeye Valley."

After a pair of Rose Bowl losses to Washington and lifelong friend and defensive coordinator Bill Brashier stepping down afterward, the Hawkeyes' 38-18 win against the Huskies in the 1995 Sun Bowl was sweet for multiple reasons.

87. "That was a fine effort by a group of fine young men and they whipped — and I put that in capital letters — a very, very fine Washington team that was co-champs of the Pac-10," Fry said.

In 1983, No. 10 Iowa finished the regular season 9-2 and were strongly considered for the Cotton Bowl. Southwest Conference champion Texas did not want to face the Hawkeyes, so Georgia was invited instead. Iowa picked up a trip to the Gator Bowl, which was met with modest disdain by fans.

88. "We don't want to get fat and sassy all at once," Fry said. "Let's don't jump up and be hot dogs. We should be appreciative and thankful. The Gator is a step up from the Peach. We probably spoiled our fans by going to the Rose Bowl first."



There's no straight story about why Iowa's visiting locker room was painted pink. In the past, Fry has told reporters it was because pink was the only available color. He also said it held a calming influence over people. Others believe it was based on sexism. No matter how its meaning is interpreted, the pink locker room continues to generate discussion among Iowa's opponents.

89. "I was the guy that started that just as a joke," Fry said. "The people have taken it seriously. What the heck, if they want to get more concerned about the color of a dressing room wall than the ballgame they're about to play, that will give us an advantage. But it certainly wasn't done intentionally."

At SMU, Fry was the first coach to integrate the Southwest Conference by handing a scholarship to Jerry LeVias. More than a decade after his retirement, Fry considered breaking the league's color barrier as his most important coaching achievement. It also came with countless death threats directed toward himself and LeVias.

90. "That is the greatest thing I did in 47 years of coaching, from high school to the Marine Corps to college, is to give the first black player a scholarship in that part of the world because it opened up the door for all the other fine black players to at least have a choice of where they wanted to go to school," Fry said. "Because at that time they had to go to the Big Ten or the Pac-10 or whatever."

91. "I've been told repeatedly by law enforcement, specifically by the FBI and CIA and other people I had to deal with, not to discuss it publicly because what it does is it triggers all the other people in the world that are sick or as I call the rednecks who are still fighting the Civil War."

In 1996, Iowa State's coaching staff shared information with Arizona, which opened the season against the Hawkeyes.

92. "I didn't turn a backward flip when I heard about it. They are not obligated not to do that. There's not anything illegal about that."

93. "Coaches are a different breed of cat. Like Dick Tracy, they're gonna try to find out everything they can. That's just human nature."

'I'll always be a Hawkeye'

On Nov. 23, 1998, Fry retired as Iowa's coach. He walked into the news conference and sobbed almost immediately.

94. "I have to apologize to all you people. I promised myself I wouldn't do that. But I'm a very emotional person, and it's very meaningful to me. I'm sorry."

95. "Selfishly, it's not the right time for me. I'd rather gone out with a real good season and all that good stuff that coaches talk about."

96. "I say this in all sincerity. If I coach next year, I pass Bear Bryant in number of games coached. I don't want to do that. I'm not in Bear Bryant's class. If I coach next year, I could possibly pass Coach Schembechler and Woody Hayes in wins. I don't want to do that. I'm not in their class."

97. "It seems appropriate that it's the week of Thanksgiving to give thanks, and I do. I spent 20 years as a member of the Hawkeye family. I can never repay them."

98. "I'm a mean old son of a gun. So after I go out and let my beard grow and my hair grow and go down in the Grand Canyon on a mule or a jackass, I might show up someplace again like Pop Warner or Alonzo Stagg, and add to my record. I'm just kidding you about that."

99. "I truly love the University of Iowa. I truly love the state of Iowa, and I'll always be a Hawkeye."

Fry concluded his final news conference as coach with the perfect Haydenism.

100. "Adios."

(Top photo courtesy of Iowa Athletics)



Scott Dochterman is a staff writer for The Athletic covering the Iowa Hawkeyes. He previously covered Iowa athletics for the Cedar Rapids Gazette and Land of 10. Scott also worked as an adjunct professor teaching sports journalism at the University of Iowa.

COMMENTS

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Mel P. · May 26, 2020

Great article. Sure brings back memories.

👍 1

Scott Dochterman · May 26, 2020 **STAFF**

@Mel P. Thanks Mel. It was enjoyable to look them all up.

👍 1

David C. · May 26, 2020

Thanks Scott. This was fantastic! I don't think people remember how bad Iowa was and how much fun Hayden was. Beating Nebraska that magical season was incredible, especially with all the Nebraska fans I was around at the time. The rivalry with Bo and Michigan was so much fun. Win or lose it was going to be an entertaining game and week.

I honestly think this is why some of us get frustrated with Kirk. We remember how much fun it was with Hayden. Personality. The "exotics". The innovative offenses. The incredible assistants that would leave to become legends themselves - Snyder, Stoops, Alvarez, Ferentz and so many others. Ferentz is a heck of a coach and runs a solid program but it's just not as fun. Or maybe I am just getting old.

👍 1

[Hidden] · May 26, 2020

[Comment removed for violating Code of Conduct]

👍 1

Larry W. · May 26, 2020

Never get enough Haydenisms!

👍 1

[Hidden] · May 26, 2020

[Comment removed for violating Code of Conduct]

👍 1

Tim B. · May 26, 2020

Well done. Learned quite a bit. Re/ the '85 team being the best in school history, I'm glad you included the 'perhaps' The best (no 'perhaps') was the '58 team, imo.

👍 1

Jeff B. · May 26, 2020

@Tim B. Or 1922.

👍 1

T Tom C. · May 27, 2020

All I did was smile while I read your article...thanks.



J Jim Z. · Jun 2, 2020

Great story about a great man!!!



D D. L. · Jun 10, 2020

I laughed and smiled more than a few times reading that!



J Jon T. · Jun 14, 2020

Great memories, Scott! My freshman year as a student at Iowa was the 1981 season we all remember. What a fabulous stretch it was, my five falls on campus as a student—Rose, Peach, Gator, Freedom, and Rose again. I've been a season ticket holder since 1996, and those early years under Fry were such special memories. Thanks for helping me remember!



J John A. · Dec 17, 2020

Great job Scott. I got to meet Hayden at the Nashua, Iowa "I" club event. Hayden would come up to it but he didn't want anything for coming. However, the "I" Club members surprised him and gave him a half side of beef! He loved the gift! The next year they gave him a whole hog! Shirley received a quilt one year. Hayden would walk around holding a beer can that was empty. That way he could tell people thanks, but no thanks. I have a beer when they wanted to buy him one. I'm not sure he ever drank alcohol! I loved him. He is the greatest coach Iowa ever had. I'm so glad I got to watch his teams play!



T Tom W. · Dec 17, 2020

Wow, great work Scott!



B Bradley B. · Sep 4, 2022

Brian and Kirk should read #4 over and over and over again. Then start Padilla.



