

# 'I'll Always Be A Hawkeye': Fry Built A Foundation For Iowa's Success

Legendary coach, 90, died on Tuesday night.

JOHN BOHNENKAMP • UPDATED: DEC 17, 2019 11:42 PM EST - ORIGINAL: DEC 17, 2019



The 1998 season, a 3-8 year that included five consecutive losses, proved to be the finale for Hayden Fry's 20-season run as Iowa's football coach.

Two days after a 49-7 loss at Minnesota, Fry tearfully announced his retirement.

"I'll always be a Hawkeye," he said, and that's how he will be remembered.

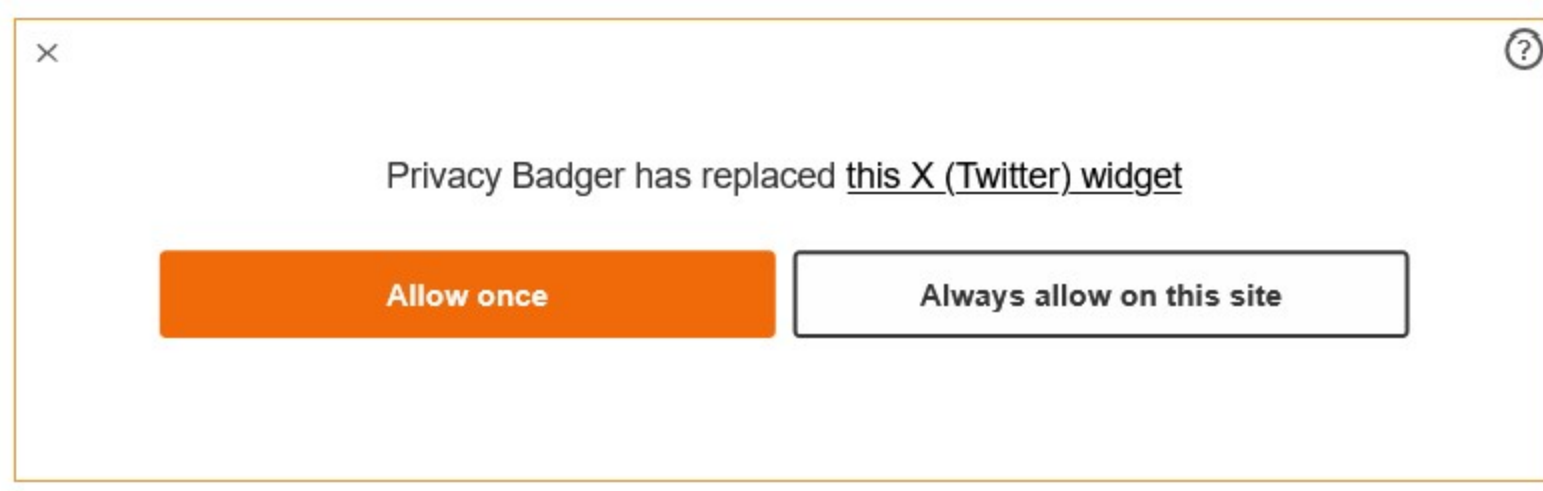
Fry, 90, died on Tuesday night after a lengthy battle with cancer.

Fry took Iowa to 14 bowl games in his career, finishing his career as Iowa's winningest coach with 149 victories, a total that was passed by his successor, Kirk Ferentz, last season.

"Hayden Fry is a college football icon and an Iowa legend," said Ferentz, who was an assistant under Fry from 1981-89. "His Hall of Fame career is well known, but personally, he will always be the man who took a chance on me at the start of my coaching career. I was proud to coach with him and honored to succeed him when he retired. He's been a great mentor and a true friend. I am forever grateful to him."

"We are proud to know that our father's life had a positive influence on so many people, the players, the coaches, and the fans who played for, worked with, and supported his long and successful coaching career," Fry's family said in a statement on Tuesday night. "His legend will live forever with the people he touched and inspired, and the programs he led to greater heights."

"Though Hayden was born in Texas and moved there more recently to be closer to our family, his love for the University of Iowa, his players and coaches, the people of Iowa, and the state of Iowa, is well known. Hayden often shared, 'I'll Always Be a Hawkeye.'"

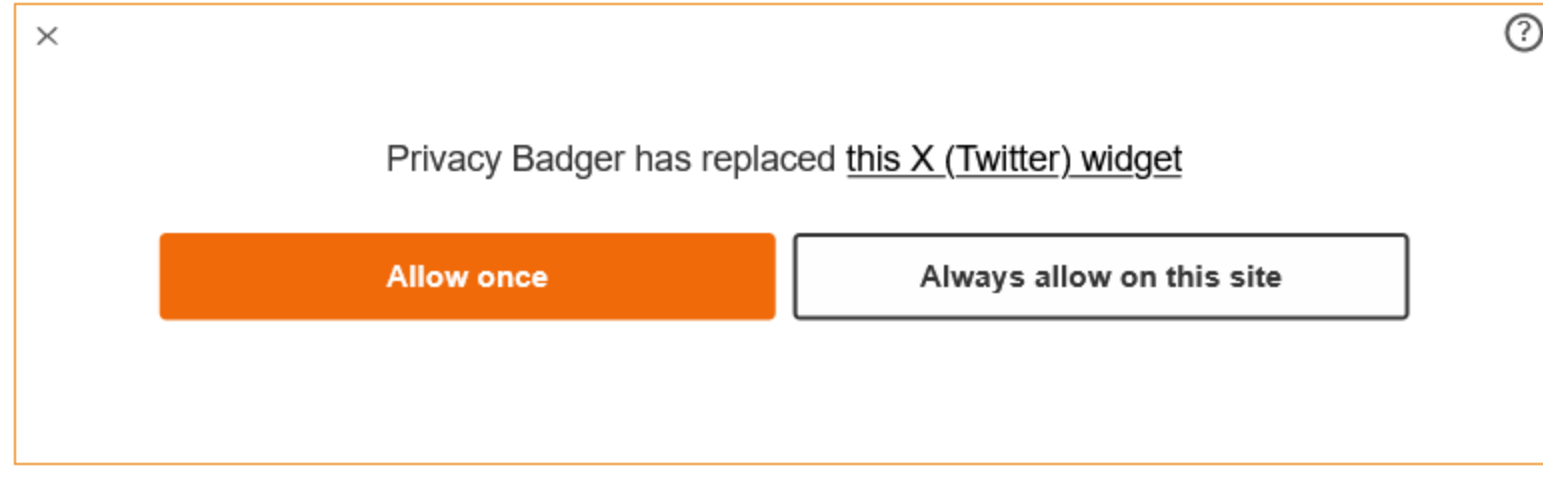


Iowa Athletics has lost an icon, a man that raised the bar for every Hawkeye program, and every member of our athletics department," Iowa athletics director Gary Barta said. "Hayden was respected by everyone who knew him. His passing creates a void for all those who played for, coached with, and supported his successful tenure as our head football coach."

Fry, hired by Iowa after the 1978 season, took over a program that had 17 consecutive losing seasons, and in his first two seasons went 5-6 and 4-7.

But in 1981, the Hawkeyes went 8-4, including wins over Nebraska and UCLA to start the season. They went 6-2 in the Big Ten, going to the Rose Bowl, Iowa's first bowl appearance since 1959.

That started a streak of eight consecutive winning seasons, including 1985, when the Hawkeyes went 10-2 and were ranked No. 1 in the nation at midseason after a last-second 12-10 win over No. 2 Michigan in a nationally-televvised game at Kinnick Stadium.



The 1985 team featured quarterback Chuck Long, who was a runner-up in the voting for the Heisman Trophy.

"I have to give him all the credit for getting my personal career launched among others," Long said. "I speak for many of the Hawkeye football past players. He had a special way of making you feel good all the time even in the tough games and in the tough moments. For me it was after an interception. He had a way of getting you back up and confident. That feeling... not every coach has that ability and I've been around a bunch of them. Not every coach has that ability to make you feel confident and be positive even in the negative situations."

Iowa struggled from 1992-94, going 16-18-1 in those three seasons with one bowl appearance, then made three consecutive bowl appearances from 1995-97.

Fry was a master of psychology — the visiting team's locker room at Kinnick Stadium was painted pink, and every season, it seemed, he would get angry during one of his weekly press conferences to take the pressure off his players. His Texas voice resonated with the state and the Hawkeye fan base.



His staff at Iowa included future head coaches Ferentz, Barry Alvarez (Wisconsin), Bill Snyder (Kansas State), Dan McCarney (Iowa State and North Texas) and Don Patterson (Western Illinois).

"I think of Hayden as a person who gave me an opportunity," Alvarez said in an interview on BTN late Tuesday night. "I always told him, when I addressed him or we were at functions together or whatever, I told people he's the guy who gave me a break."

Fry coached eight consensus All-Americans at Iowa — Andre Tippett (1981), Reggie Roby (1981), Larry Station (1984 and 1985), Long (1985), Marv Cook (1988), LeRoy Smith (1991), Tim Dwight (1997), and Jared DeVries (1998).

Fry began his head coaching career at SMU, coaching there from 1962-1972. Fry, who was a four-time Southwest Conference coach of the year, was best known for signing Jerry LeVias, who became the first African-American football player in the conference.

Fry was the head coach at North Texas from 1973-78.

At the time of his retirement, Fry ranked 10th in all-time victories nationally. Fry, inducted into the National Football Foundation College Football Hall of Fame, was 233-177-10 in his career, 143-89-6 at Iowa.

"If I coach next year, I pass Bear Bryant in the number of games coached. I don't want to do that," Fry said at his retirement press conference. "I'm not in Bear Bryant's class. If I coached next year, there's a possibility I'd pass Bo Schembechler and Woody Hayes. I don't want to do that. I'm not in their class."

Bob Bowsby, Iowa's athletics director at the time of Fry's retirement, disagreed with that assessment during that same press conference.

"Hayden Fry," he said, "is cut from the same cloth as all of the other great coaches in college football."



BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP

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