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Bob Stoops: Hayden Fry brought "swagger and attitude" to Iowa

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The 1983 Iowa football coaching staff: Back row, from left: Bill Snyder (offensive coordinator), Del Miller (offensive assistant), Kirk Ferentz (offensive line), head coach Hayden Fry, Carl Jackson (running backs coach), Don Patterson (tight ends), Bill Dervich (strength and conditioning). Front row, from left: Bernie Wyatt (defensive ends/recruiting coordinator), Barry Alvarez (linebackers), Bill Brashier (defensive coordinator), Dan McCarney (defensive line), Bob Stoops (graduate assistant).

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The term 'coaching tree' has been used extensively about Hayden Fry, but his was more like a coaching redwood.

When Fry, who died Tuesday at age 90, was Iowa's coach in the 1980s, he had a lot of assistant coaches who went on to be head coaches. Two, Bill Snyder and Barry Alvarez, are in the College Football Hall of Fame with Fry. Two others, Bob Stoops and Kirk Ferentz, will get there once they're eligible.

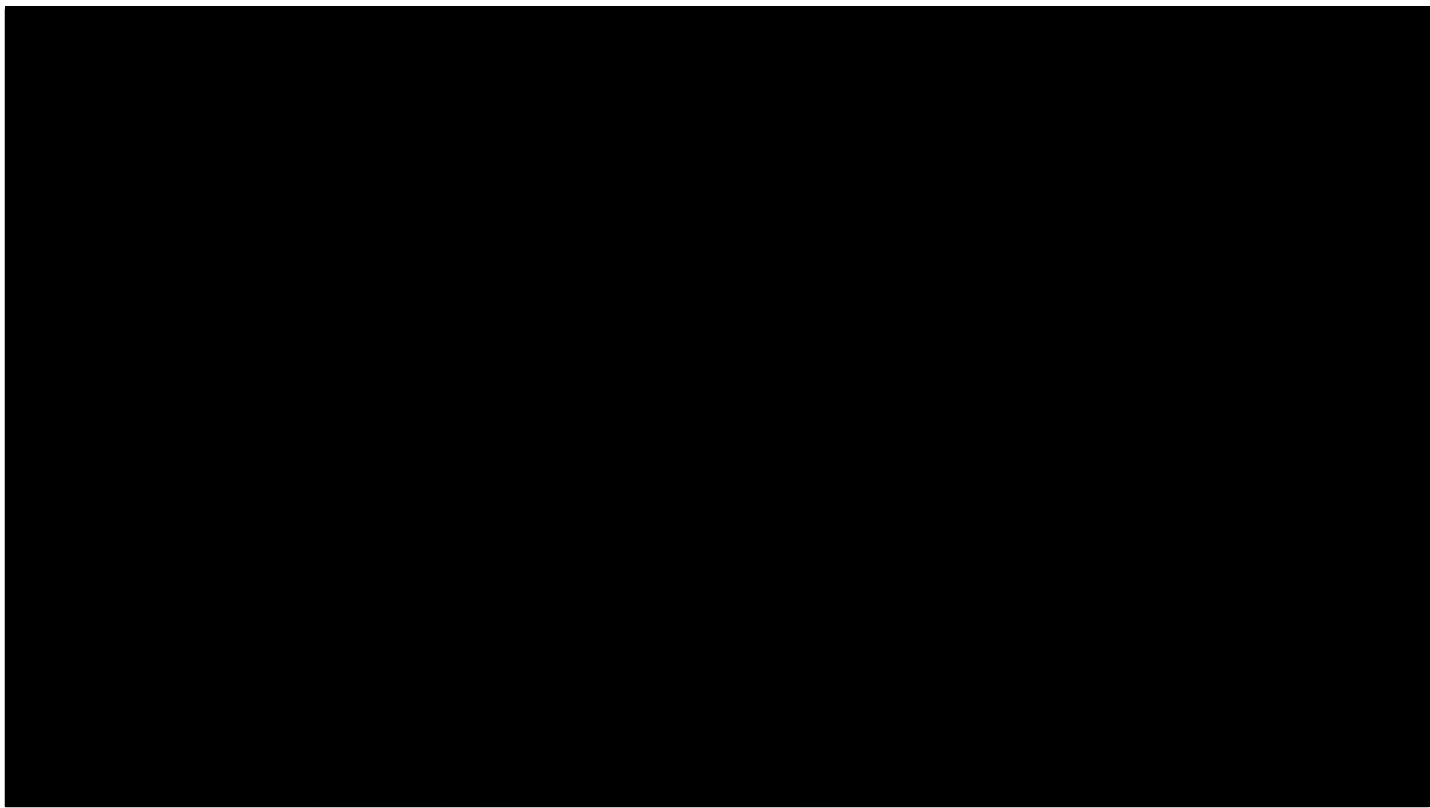
By phone Wednesday, Snyder said he was still 'processing some things' about Fry's death, and 'revisiting our wonderful years together.'

Snyder was Fry's offensive coordinator at Iowa from 1979 to 1988, then embarked on his 215-victory career as Kansas State's head coach. Fry brought Snyder to Iowa with him from North Texas State. Fry had originally hired Snyder out of Austin College.

'Hayden was an amazing individual,' Snyder said. 'I can't tell you how many calls I've gotten from ex-players of his who had such great appreciation of him and all he did for them.'

'I've gotten many texts and calls from coaches who have the same respect for Hayden.'

'I think the most significant thing about him was how he interacted with people, how positive he was. He treated players extremely well.'



Stoops was recruited from Youngstown, Ohio, and was in on the ground floor with Fry at Iowa. Stoops played defensive back at Iowa from 1979 to 1982, Fry's first four years there. He was then on Fry's coaching staff from 1983 through 1987 before going off to build his own legacy. He became Oklahoma's head coach in 1999 and won 190 games and a national championship over his 18 seasons.

His brothers Mike and Mark Stoops also played at Iowa.

'What a blessing he was to our family,' Bob Stoops said Wednesday. 'My life would have been totally different if he doesn't come to Iowa.'

'He had an incredible life, and made such an impact on the state of Iowa.'

Stoops said 'swagger and attitude' were what Fry brought to Iowa.

'They hadn't had a winning season in 17 years when he arrived,' said Stoops. 'He changed our attitude. We weren't going to take s-dot-dot-dot from anybody.'

He said that's what he tried to incorporate at Oklahoma when he got there.

'Play with an attitude and toughness and a belief we deserved to win.'

At the high school level, former Fry player Marv Cook has coached at Iowa City Regina for 13 years that includes six state championships.

Fry 'was a great resource. I use everything he taught us,' said Cook, an All-America tight end at Iowa in 1988.

'He always seemed larger than life to me as a fan of Iowa football, as a player of Iowa football, and as an alum of Iowa football.'

'First and foremost, he changed the course and direction of my life in such a positive way. He showed us how to live our lives, in the classroom, in our family lives. He talked about it all the time to us, what we needed to do on a daily basis to be successful.'

Being from West Branch, Cook never wanted to play college ball anywhere but Iowa. But the deal sealer was when Fry went to Mercy Iowa City to visit with Cook's mother, who was a nurse at that hospital.

'She was ecstatic,' Cook said. 'She introduced him to everybody on the floor, even some patients. When she got home, there wasn't a question in my household of where I was going to go play.'

