

# Iowa position breakdowns: Secondary (premium)

\*Every day this week, *HawkeyeDrive.com* will be previewing the 2010 version of the Iowa Hawkeyes position by position. Here in Part Six of our seven-part series, we examine this season's crop of defensive backs. Click here for Parts [One](#), [Two](#), [Three](#), [Four](#), and [Five](#).\*

By Brendan Stiles

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Aside from one possible question mark at cornerback, the Iowa secondary looks to remain a strong unit in 2010.

The leadership comes from the safeties, as both junior Tyler Sash and senior Brett Greenwood enter their third years starting together in the defensive backfield. Last season, Sash had a big sophomore campaign compiling six interceptions. Half of those picks came in a 35-3 win over Iowa State, while his pick-six against Indiana changed the complexion of the Hawkeyes' 42-24 victory against the Hoosiers.

The Oskaloosa native now has 11 takeaways for his career. Iowa's all-time record is 18 interceptions by both Devon Mitchell and Nile Kinnick, a mark Sash could potentially break this season.

In addition to the six picks, Sash finished last season with 85 tackles for the Hawkeyes, 41 of which were unassisted. The 6-1 strong safety owes his success to Iowa defensive backs coach Phil Parker.

"He has taught me the ins-and-outs of playing defensive back, and just the little things to look for," Sash said. "He has helped me out a lot."

As for Greenwood, he had 55 tackles and three interceptions last season for Iowa, with two of his three takeaways coming against Iowa State as well.

Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz stressed the importance of defensive play in the middle of the field, and he said his team is fortunate to have players like Sash and Greenwood in the safety spots.

“To have those guys with their experience level, it’s really a benefit,” Ferentz said. “They both think right and have great attitudes. They are just smart football players, as well as being talented.”

Sash talked about how the two of them enjoy some of the time they enjoy off the field, saying they lift and run together. He added that the relationship they have developed on the field has been strong from the beginning.

“Literally, Day One I got here, Greenwood: ‘Hey, let’s go watch some film. I’m going to show you some things.’ That has continued each and every week we have played together,” Sash said. “That will continue as far as we go together.”

While the Hawkeyes are set at the two safety positions, cornerback is a slightly different story. After becoming a starter last season, the coaches feel comfortable with junior Shaun Prater starting on the left side. The Omaha, Neb., native started 10 games for Iowa last season and recorded 41 tackles, 25 of which were solo. He also broke up eight passes and had two interceptions.

Prater said he learned a lot from playing opposite from shutdown corner Amari Spivey, who decided to forego his senior year and was selected by the Detroit Lions in the third round of the 2010 NFL Draft.

“Last year was my first season starting, and he told me to go on and do everything you do in practice, and try to make plays

to the best of your ability," Prater said about Spievey's advice to him about being able to relax.

If there are any questions with the secondary, none are bigger than who replaces Spievey at right cornerback. Right now, sophomore Micah Hyde has emerged atop the team's 2-deep, a decision the coaches made last spring. However, there is a bit of a competition there, as junior Jordan Bernstine is right behind Hyde.

Hyde got a chance to play at times on defense and special teams last season, including an appearance on defense during the 2010 FedEx Orange Bowl in which Iowa beat Georgia Tech, 24-14. He said that getting some sort of playing time was huge for him, and that he learned a lot from being able to travel with the team for road games last season.

While Hyde is listed as Spievey's replacement, he said he isn't taking the opportunity for granted.

"We got camp right now, and that's just the biggest right now, just competing in camp every day and getting better," Hyde said. "Even the coaches would tell you [the spring] is not going to be who is starting this season, so keep competing and doing your thing."

As for Bernstine, he returns to the gridiron for the Hawkeyes this season after missing all of 2009 with a broken ankle suffered in the preseason.

He not only is happy to be back on the field, but is also excited about this battle throughout fall camp with Hyde.

"I love competition," Bernstine said. "Everybody's out competing to start camp, and we'll be competing throughout."

"We're going to be pushing each other."