

Hawkeye defense practices Parker's preaching (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Iowa defensive coordinator Norm Parker stresses the following phrase to his defense: “Six seconds of hell.”

The concept behind this, according to safety Tyler Sash, is fairly simple.

“It’s about going out, playing six seconds, and leverage the ball,” the junior said. “There’s nothing special to it. It’s just going out and playing smash-mouth football.”

When the No. 9 Iowa Hawkeyes took to the field on Saturday against Iowa State, it was without the services of Parker. The defensive mastermind has had an ongoing battle with diabetes, and was in the hospital on Saturday during the Hawkeyes’ 35-7 win over the Cyclones.

Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said Parker had been dealing with back pain on Sept. 9, and was admitted to the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics on Sept. 10.

“We thought there was a shot he would be out sometime this morning and be able to rejoin us. He wasn’t able to,” Ferentz said. “That’s the bad news.

“Good new, everything I’ve heard so far, at least there’s nothing major going on. Hopefully we’ll get him back here in the next couple days.”

Knowing its leader wouldn’t be there, the Iowa defense had extra incentive to practice the “six seconds of hell” Parker

constantly preaches.

Aside from a touchdown in the game's final minutes with the outcome well decided, to say the Hawkeyes unleashed hell on Iowa State's offense wouldn't do it justice.

After giving up 190 yards on the ground to the Cyclones last season, Iowa State could only muster 78 rushing yards on Saturday against this Hawkeye defense.

Cyclone senior running back Alexander Robinson, who accumulated 100 of those 190 yards in the 2009 meeting, was held to 48 yards rushing on 11 carries. Senior quarterback Austen Arnaud only had nine carries for 20 yards on the ground.

"I think last year, looking back at the film, we didn't play physical at all. We kind of got intimidated," senior defensive end Adrian Clayborn said. "This year, we just showed up to the game."

As if that wasn't enough, the Iowa defense had a third quarter to remember, causing Arnaud to throw interceptions on three consecutive possessions.

The first of these picks came from junior cornerback Shaun Prater, who was back in the starting line-up after missing last week's game against Eastern Illinois with a leg strain.

"I was staring the quarterback down the whole game," Prater said. "He was staring his wide receivers down the entire game, so I finally got a chance to make a play."

Prater's interception was followed up by senior safety Brett Greenwood picking off Arnaud inside the red zone. The Bettendorf native's interception led to a 39-yard touchdown run by Adam Robinson just three plays later.

Finally, the Cyclones elected to go for it on 4th-and-12 from the Iowa 20, only to see junior linebacker Tyler Nielsen make

the interception to keep Iowa State off the scoreboard.

"I was just reading and reacting, and just dropped back into coverage," Nielsen said. "I saw the ball come up and thought, 'I'm going to have to jump to get this one.'"

When the Cyclones did finally score a touchdown courtesy of wide receiver Darius Darks, it snapped a streak of 17 consecutive quarters in which Iowa State failed to score a touchdown on the Iowa defense. That streak dated back to the 2006 meeting between these two programs, which was the last for former Iowa State head coach Dan McCarney.

It was a performance the defense dedicated to Parker.

"We wanted to play for him and wanted to make plays for him," senior middle linebacker Jeff Tarpinian said, after returning to the starting line-up from a hand injury and leading the Hawkeyes on Saturday with 11 tackles. "He put in a scheme for us, and we were ready to go. We wanted to go out there and just do it for him today."