

# 9/20/2010: Ball State "Film Study" (premium)

*Every Monday throughout the course of the 2010 Iowa football season, we will have a weekly series titled "Film Study." In this series, we go back and watch the previous game of Iowa's upcoming opponent and put together a list of observations. This week, we examine the Ball State Cardinals, who pay a visit to Kinnick Stadium on Sept. 25.*

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Last weekend, after covering Iowa's 34-27 loss to Arizona, I went back and watched Ball State's 24-13 loss to Purdue on Sept. 18 for the first time and watched in its entirety.

Below is a list of observations I made of the Cardinals from examining the game real closely:

## ***Offense***

*This Ball State offense is rather interesting, as it features a balance of plays under center and out of the shotgun formation. The Cardinals showed they were willing to run plays either way. From a schematic standpoint, this causes defenses to be on their toes.*

*The biggest issue with Ball State right now is with its quarterback play. Kelly Page was originally the team's starter entering this season, but was benched in favor of Keith Wenning. The reason this is extremely important to note is because Wenning is a true freshman.*

*Based off what I saw the Cardinals do against Purdue this past weekend, I will say this: I expect both Ball State signal-callers to see action against the Hawkeyes.*

Wenning is expected to start, as he did against the Boilermakers. The difference between these two quarterbacks is that Wenning is much more likely to throw the football when he isn't handing it off to one of his backs, while Page is a lot more willing to take off with the football and run with it.

One aspect of Wenning's game that stood out to me as I watched what he did against the Boilermaker defense was his success on rollouts. He was at his best completing passes to his targets when he threw on the run on a rollout play. It didn't have to be play-action necessarily, but Wenning seemed to perform well when he ran outside the hashes.

As a result, I thought Ball State did a decent job of pushing the ball out towards the sidelines when passing. Purdue managed to pick up on this throughout the second half, but the first half, this was Wenning's strong suit.

He did throw two costly interceptions, however. One was in the red zone, where he floated it up for a Purdue defender. The other was a wounded duck he got off as he was feeling pressure from Purdue's Ryan Kerrigan.

Strangely enough, the one touchdown pass of the game for the Cardinals came from Page, who was 2-of-2 passing on a drive in the fourth quarter after the Boilermakers basically clinched the win. For the majority of the game though, when Page was in, he was tucking the football in and running with it.

Speaking of the running game, I picked up on one aspect of Ball State's ground attack. Any time I saw Wenning audible out of shotgun and get under center, the tight end would go in motion, and the end result would be a run play up the middle, or inside the hashes. This is where some of the Cardinals' best runs were taking place.

Ball State has two running backs it relies heavily on – MiQuale Lewis and Eric Williams. I would expect both to be asked to make major contributions for the Cardinals this

weekend.

The offensive line wasn't special any means, but it wasn't necessarily bad. However, there is one very important point to make. Ball State lost left tackle Cameron Lowry in the first quarter of this contest to what turns out to be a torn ACL sidelining him for the rest of the season. The Cardinals' other starting tackle, Dan Manick, really struggled against Kerrigan in this game.

There isn't really anything special about the wide receivers or tight ends.

## **Defense**

Ball State runs a pretty simple 4-3 defense.

I have to say as I watched this particular game, I thought the Cardinal defense looked dreadful in the first quarter. Purdue scored touchdowns on its opening two possessions of the contest.

But from the second quarter on, I have to say Ball State played sort of stingy defensively.

The rest of Purdue's points came in the fourth quarter, and the Boilermaker touchdown came on a deep ball where Ball State's Jeffrey Garrett attempted to bat away the football, only to see it land into the hands of a Purdue wideout who had nothing but green in his sights.

He didn't start this game along the defensive line, but I came away impressed by nose tackle Rene Perry. He forced a fumble, and also had a nice sack where he eluded a Boilermaker attempting to go low for a block. In the linebacking corps, I think Justin Cruz is a guy to keep an eye on, as is middle linebacker Travis Freeman, who led Ball State with nine tackles against Purdue.

The Cardinals really didn't blitz Purdue much in this game, so

the linebackers more often than not are going to stay in coverage.

The player who probably had the best game for the Cardinals defensively was safety Sean Baker. He had eight tackles, all of which were solo. Baker also recorded an interception in this contest, and it was really a great read by him. He read Purdue quarterback Robert Marve's eyes the whole way and made a solid play on the football.

How Ball State's defense comes out and starts this week against Iowa is important because it will determine how close the game ends up being.

### **Special Teams**

Ball State did have one solid kickoff return in the fourth quarter from Williams that set up the touchdown drive orchestrated by Page. However, the big thing I took away with the Cardinal special teams was the two missed field goals in the first half from kicker Ian McGarvey, which came on consecutive possessions in the second quarter.

The first miss, from 44 yards, came on a Ball State drive that got the Cardinals into the red zone before a fumble running the Wildcat formation and a illegal substitution penalty pushed them out. McGarvey lined up from the right hash and just kicked it straight.

Ball State got the ball back after an atrocious punt from the Boilermakers of 16 yards on the Purdue 38-yard line. But the Cardinals went 3-and-out, and lined up on the left hash, McGarvey hooked his second field goal attempt to the right.

Another major issue is right after Ball State scored its first touchdown of the day in the third quarter, the Cardinals' other kicker Steven Schott had his PAT blocked.

Punt and kickoff coverage was fine, and there wasn't anything

*terrible with these areas of special teams. Ball State does run that swinging gate-type punt formation that all of Iowa's opponents thus far in 2010 have used.*

### ***Coaching***

*I'm not going to totally rip on Stan Parrish because I thought his team showed some grit in this game against an in-state rival. I will say that while the Cardinals were showing different looks offensively, there wasn't much creativity with the playcalling.*

*Every time Page took the snap before the game got out of hand, he was running with the ball. Every time Wenning called an audible out of a shotgun play and into one where he was under center, it was a run inside the hashmarks.*

*Maybe there will be more in store this week against Iowa, but the lack of creativity in playcalling, I believe, is a slight cause for concern.*

### ***Strengths***

- Offensive backfield depth*
- Defense doesn't just give up when it struggles*
- Multiple formations on offense*

### ***Weaknesses***

- Finishing drives*
- Offensive line concerns*
- Special teams issues*

### ***Final Thoughts***

*I'll start by saying this is a game Iowa should win with some ease, like the Hawkeyes did in previous victories over both*

Eastern Illinois and Iowa State.

Iowa will enter with some concerns, however. It will likely be without running back Jewel Hampton, who got hurt in the Hawkeyes' 34-27 loss to Arizona last weekend and was not listed on the 2-deep sent out on Monday. This means Adam Robinson is going to have to carry the bulk of the workload for the Hawkeyes' ground game.

One area Purdue exploited in Ball State's defense on those scoring drives it had in the first quarter was the middle of the field. Ball State's two touchdowns it allowed through the air were down the sidelines, but the Cardinals were leaving Purdue a lot of room to work with in the middle. This is something I think Iowa can really take advantage of early on.

Being more specific, I think tight ends like Allen Reisner and Brad Herman could potentially have big games for the Hawkeyes should they try to utilize that open space they will likely get.

Another important point I'd make is that the Cardinals had a hard time getting their defense off the field. Purdue was 10-of-17 on third-down conversions. And it didn't matter what the distance for a first down was, either.

In terms of how this affects Iowa, the Hawkeyes have to be able to move the chains, especially on third downs. If Iowa can do this, it will control the time of possession, something the Cardinals actually did best the Boilermakers in last weekend. I say this because I think the defense will make enough plays that Ball State struggles offensively.

I expect Robinson to have a much better game than the 5-yard rushing performance he had in Arizona. But the Hawkeyes are going to need to be effective in both the running and passing games, that way he can get the amount of rest he'll need before Big Ten play opens up next week.

It also wouldn't be surprising to see Iowa run plenty of play-action. Purdue had some big plays running this, and we all know Ricky Stanzi can hit Marvin McNutt or Derrell Johnson-Koulianos at any moment on a deep ball. This might be something the Hawkeyes consider once Ball State adjusts and puts an additional corner or safety in the box to stop Robinson.

Looking at the other side of the football, I expect big games from both Adrian Clayborn and Broderick Binns. I mentioned how Manick really struggled against Purdue. Binns will be lined up on him. Clayborn will be lined up on left tackle Austin Holtz, who is now filling in for the injured Lowry.

Considering how Wenning likes rolling out of the pocket when he steps back to throw, there are going to be plenty of chances for both ends to get a pass rush off the edge and keep Wenning bottled up. Again, it's important to stress that when Page does come in at quarterback, the Cardinals are more prone to running the football.

I also think Karl Klug, Christian Ballard, and middle linebacker Jeff Tarcup could all have big performances if Ball State continues to do what it did with running the football against Purdue, which was continuously run inside the hashes.

This might be stating the obvious given its performance against Arizona, but special teams has to improve significantly. I think Iowa has a chance to possibly block a punt early in this game like what Paki O'Meara was able to do against Eastern Illinois. And again, just like the Hawkeyes last week, Ball State also had a PAT blocked, so the Cardinals have their struggles as well.

Iowa needs to do what Purdue did, which is jump out to a fast start. However, the Hawkeyes can't become complacent like the Boilermakers were during the middle two quarters of their game

with Ball State last week, otherwise the Cardinals have what it takes to hang around.

If the Hawkeyes step on their throats early, Iowa should have enough in it to win this game convincingly.