

Receivers shine in sloppy conditions (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – When the No. 18 Iowa Hawkeyes took the field at Kinnick Stadium on Saturday, they did so to wet conditions.

It may not have been the same torrential downpour many of these players dealt with at Penn State a year ago, but nonetheless, there was precipitation leaving its mark on everything and anything in its sight.

Under most circumstances, it's a challenge to get a passing game going whenever a wet football is involved. But with this Hawkeye receiving corps, this 45-0 victory over Ball State was not one of those instances.

Iowa recorded 572 yards of total offense in this game. Of those 572 yards, 306 of them came through the air, including 288 passing yards from senior quarterback Ricky Stanzi.

Early and often, the Hawkeyes threw the football. Senior wide receiver Colin Sandeman said that coming in, the wideouts' focus this week was to "make the make-ables."

On the opening drive, Stanzi completed two passes to senior tight end Allen Reisner. The following Iowa possession, there were three straight completions – two to Reisner, one to senior wide receiver Derrell Johnson-Koulianos – before sophomore running back Adam Robinson took over the drive.

"I think with their defense, the way they were playing, they were loading the box up," Reisner said after finishing with a team-high five receptions for 53 yards.

Throughout the first half, Stanzi found himself throwing the football repeatedly. Some throws looked awful, some were on the money. But nevertheless, these passes set up bigger dividends for the offense later in the game.

"It helps when you can hit the short passes because it gets a rhythm going, and you're getting some extra yards going down the field," Stanzi said after completing 19 of his 25 pass attempts on Saturday. "We're completing passes, so we're getting confidence there, and then that will open up the deep balls later in the game."

In the second quarter, Iowa had a 7-0 lead when junior wide receiver Marvin McNutt caught a pass, and wound up injuring his leg. This caused McNutt to miss the remainder of the contest.

Coming into his place was sophomore Keenan Davis. In his first full series on the field, the Cedar Rapids native delivered. Davis had receptions on Iowa's first two plays of its second scoring drive, and finished it by hauling in an 8-yard touchdown catch.

McNutt said after the game that Davis had "grown up."

"I was happy to see he looked more aggressive out there today," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said after stressing the investment put into Davis last year by the coaching staff since he wasn't redshirted. "That's part of growing up, part of gaining some confidence. Hopefully, this will be a big step for him."

Davis likened the bond he and his fellow Hawkeye receivers have to that of a brotherhood.

"That's the whole thing with me and the receivers. We're really tight together, all of us," Davis said. "When we do bad, they'll let you know. When we do good, they'll let you know."

While Davis became more mature, Johnson-Koulianos inched his way closer towards two career receiving marks. The Campbell, Ohio native caught four passes for 87 yards. This stat line now has Johnson-Koulianos 14 catches away from breaking Kevin Kasper's career receptions mark, and 131 receiving yards away from surpassing Tim Dwight as Iowa's all-time leading receiver.

Sandeman also got in on the action in the fourth quarter, catching a 6-yard touchdown pass from sophomore quarterback James Vandenberg.

Making the "make-able" plays, as Sandeman put it, was something the receiving corps was able to do, from start to finish.

"Any time we go out there, we're just trying to make plays to help the team," Sandeman said. "It was good to get a bunch of guys in and make some plays."