

Miscues in all areas doom Hawkeyes (premium)

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HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – In all three facets of football, the No. 13 Iowa Hawkeyes found themselves having lapses that proved costly in a heartbreaking 31-30 loss to No. 10 Wisconsin on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium.

What will be talked about the most are the three blunders Iowa had on special teams, where Iowa conceivably left four points off the scoreboard, and allowed the Badgers to execute a bold fake punt call by Wisconsin head coach Bret Bielema in the fourth quarter.

This wasn't the first time Iowa allowed an opposing punter to run for a first down this season, either. In the Hawkeyes' 37-7 victory over Eastern Illinois on Sept. 4, the Panthers' lone touchdown came after perfecting a fake punt.

"I kind of thought in the back of my head there was something up," said senior wide receiver Colin Sandeman, who was on the field lined up to return the punt. "There's four minutes left or whatever, they're down six points and they're punting, and if we string together a couple of first downs, the game is over.

"Any time someone fakes a punt, it surprises you. But I kind of think we should have known something was up."

The other two special teams miscues Iowa had. During the first half, the Hawkeyes had their first extra point attempt of the afternoon get blocked by Wisconsin defensive end J.J. Watt. There was also a 30-yard field goal attempt in the second

quarter where a bad snap led to a mishandling by punter Ryan Donahue. Instead of trimming what was a 10-6 deficit at the time to a mere point, Iowa came away empty-handed.

But for as much blame as there will be placed on the special teams unit, there was also a bad series of events leading up to that play. Iowa's offense had both a false start and illegal shift back-to-back turn a 3rd-and-1 from the Wisconsin 10-yard line turn into a 3rd-and-11 from the 20-yard line.

Sophomore left tackle Riley Reiff, who was called for the 3rd-and-1 false start, was kicking himself after the game for that penalty.

"I jumped on that one play, and that's what I look at," he said, adding that he and his teammates will be looking more at what didn't work as opposed to what did work.

Meanwhile, the Hawkeye defense wound up struggling all afternoon. From the opening series, to the final Badger possession, Wisconsin was continuously finding ways to post points on the scoreboard.

In fact, the Badgers managed to convert three different fourth downs in this game – one of which came near the goal-line and resulted in a touchdown from Wisconsin running back John Clay.

The other critical fourth-down conversion was the aforementioned fake punt in the fourth quarter. The Badgers were facing a 4th-and-4 from its own 26-yard line, and punter Brad Nortman wound up running a fake punt to perfection, picking up 17 yards and a Wisconsin first down.

From there, the Badgers went 57 yards further down the field and running back Montee Ball wound up running in with the game-winning 8-yard touchdown run with just over a minute remaining.

"It's all on the defense and what we need to do," senior

defensive end Adrian Clayborn said. "We needed to put out the fire, and we didn't."