

Iowa vs. Michigan State: Grades

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – The No. 18 Iowa Hawkeyes defeated the No. 5 Michigan State Spartans on Saturday inside Kinnick Stadium, 37-6. Iowa moved to 6-2 overall and 3-1 in the Big Ten, while Michigan State fell to 8-1 overall and 4-1 in conference play.

Below are the grades I would give each group of players after Saturday's game:

Quarterbacks – A-

Once again, Ricky Stanzi remained turnover-free, as this was the third straight game he went without a single interception. He completed 11-of-15 passes for 190 yards and tossed three touchdown passes to Colin Sandeman, Adam Robinson, and Marvin McNutt. He also had a critical 56-yard completion to Brad Herman in the first half. McNutt also attempted a pass on a reverse play, and he just missed a touchdown to Derrell Johnson-Koulianos in the fourth quarter.

Running Backs – A-

Adam Robinson had the first fumble of his career Saturday, but it was recovered by Iowa. Outside of that, Robinson had a touchdown run from two yards out in the final minutes of the first half, and also made a crazy 32-yard touchdown reception on a perfectly placed ball thrown from Stanzi. Robinson had 69 yards rushing on 20 carries, and Marcus Coker got 16 carries for 40 yards. Both backs were running with purpose.

Wide Receivers – A-

Even though Derrell Johnson-Koulianos didn't make a single catch and remains tied with Kevin Kasper at 157 career receptions, the performances of others proved to be enough. Marvin McNutt made an absolutely ridiculous 17-yard reception on the Hawkeyes' opening drive, and also had a 22-yard touchdown reception in which he shook off a tackler. Colin Sandeman also found the end zone, giving Iowa its first points of the afternoon.

Tight Ends – A-

Allen Reisner led the Hawkeyes in receptions with four of them, and Brad Herman had three catches as well, including a critical 56-yard reception in the first half.

Offensive Line – A-

Again, a solid outing from the guys up front. Only accounted for one of Iowa's three penalties on the afternoon, and it came in the fourth quarter with the outcome well decided. The Hawkeyes compiled 352 yards of total offense.

Defensive Line – A-

The D-Line set a tone for this Iowa defense, and while no one really stood out from the pack on Saturday, all these guys did a solid job of grounding Michigan State's rushing attack and making the Spartans one-dimensional on offense.

Linebackers – B+

You know what, these guys played admirably. Jeff Tarpinian returned to the field (albeit in a limited role). James Morris and Shane DiBona both made their first career starts and fared well. Also saw Ross Petersen and Lance Tillison get playing time on defense, and the 3-4 Iowa broke out when Michigan State faced third downs proved critical in keeping the Spartans to just six points on the afternoon.

Secondary – A

Tyler Sash, Shaun Prater and Brett Greenwood all had interceptions in this game, and Micah Hyde caught Sash's lateral on his interception and returned in 66 yards for an Iowa touchdown. No further explanation needed here.

Special Teams – B

"B" for "better." Nothing too absurd happened and Michigan State didn't pull off any trickery. However, there was a muffed punt by Colin Sandeman (which to be fair, he did recover), and a missed extra point by Michael Meyer. Take those two plays away, and this grade would be higher. Otherwise, there was clearly an improvement here.

Overall – A-

Any win over a top 5 team deserves a grade in the "A" range, especially a performance as dominating as the one by the Hawkeyes on Saturday. Given all the circumstances coming into this game, Iowa needed a bounce-back victory, and set the tone immediately. This win makes the Hawkeyes bowl-eligible for the 10th straight year, and Iowa is right back in the Big Ten race at 3-1 in the conference. As long as the Hawkeyes continue to execute in each of these final four games, a shot at Pasadena is still possible.

"BIG UPS"

My player of the game will get "Big Ups" from me (For those new to *HawkeyeDrive.com*, I'll give these out on Twitter every now and then). After No. 18 Iowa's 37-6 win over No. 5 Michigan State, anyone on the secondary would be worthing, but I ultimately decided to give this week's "Big Ups" to sophomore cornerback Micah Hyde.

Although every other defensive back actually recorded an interception in this game and cornerback Shaun Prater finished with twice as many tackles as Hyde, here's the deciding factor: Hyde made the biggest play of the game, taking the

lateral from Tyler Sash back 66 yards for a touchdown. The play changed the momentum of the game as it gave Iowa a 17-0 lead after one quarter. In addition, he made this play and had his performance with older brother Marcus Hyde on the opposing sidelines for Michigan State. So "Big Ups" to Micah Hyde.

2010 BIG UPS TALLY:

9/4/2010: Iowa 37, Eastern Illinois 7 – Adam Robinson

9/11/2010: Iowa 35, Iowa State 7 – Ricky Stanzi

9/18/2010: Arizona 34, Iowa 27 – Jeff Tarpinian

9/25/2010: Iowa 45, Ball State 0 – Mike Daniels

10/2/2010: Iowa 24, Penn State 3 – Christian Ballard

10/16/2010: Iowa 38, Michigan 28 – Derrell Johnson-Koulianos

10/23/2010: Wisconsin 31, Iowa 30 – Adam Robinson

10/30/2010: Iowa 37, Michigan State 6 – Micah Hyde