

Hawkeyes hammer Spartans to become bowl-eligible

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – If Iowa's résumé didn't have a marquee victory included before, it certainly does now.

It wasn't so much the 18th-ranked Hawkeyes handing No. 5 Michigan State its first loss of 2010 as it was how they did it. Iowa's 37-6 win at Kinnick Stadium on Saturday made the Hawkeyes bowl-eligible for the 10th straight season as Iowa now sits at 6-2 overall, and more importantly, 3-1 in the Big Ten.

"You never see that coming, not against a team like this," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said. "I never see that coming against anybody. I'm always worried about that. It happened fast, and it was really a team win in every sense."

Right from the start, the Hawkeyes came swinging. On its opening drive, Iowa marched 80 yards on 12 plays and the drive was finished by a 3-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Ricky Stanzi to wide receiver Colin Sandeman, giving the Hawkeyes a 7-0 lead.

The series was highlighted by a one-handed, over-the-shoulder catch from wide receiver Marvin McNutt, a play that got the Hawkeyes 17 yards.

"It was kind of a concentration thing," McNutt said. "I saw it come over my shoulder, and just happened to get my left hand on it first, then bring it in with the right."

Sparked by the return of defensive coordinator Norm Parker to the team, the Iowa defense put on a clinic for him.

Following a 37-yard field goal by Michael Meyer, the defense dealt Michigan State a fatal blow in the final minute of the first quarter. Spartan quarterback Kirk Cousins threw the first of three interceptions on the afternoon to safety Tyler Sash. The pick would be taken back for a touchdown when Sash lateraled the ball to cornerback Micah Hyde, who went 66 yards for the score and gave Iowa a 17-0 lead after 15 minutes.

"I saw the play 100 times on film. They ran the same play last year, and I almost got it last year," Sash said. "This year, I went a little flatter, came under it, and he threw it right to me.

"Micah's guy, who he was covering, kind of came back. He was obviously trying to tackle me, he kind of held me up a little bit, and I just made the assist. He had a heck of a run back."

Sash and Hyde wouldn't be the lone contributors in the secondary, either. Cornerback Shaun Prater followed with an interception of his own that came on the following series. Michigan State was moving the ball deep into Iowa territory, but the junior capitalized on a poorly-thrown pass from Cousins and returned the pick 42 yards.

Prater also led the Hawkeyes with 10 tackles on the afternoon.

"He just floated it up there, and I just made the play on it," Prater said about his interception.

Safety Brett Greenwood would also get in on the fun, recording an interception of his own in the second half.

Iowa would continue to pile on in the second quarter. Three plays after Prater's interception, Stanzi found running back Adam Robinson for a 32-yard touchdown pass to extend the Hawkeye lead to 23-0. However, Meyer would miss the extra point try, leaving the score at that.

"The route is something that you don't see Adam doing very

often, so that's why it works," Stanzi said. "We used it off of something that we do a lot, the naked fake. The play opened up nice, he ran a great route, and made a tremendous catch."

With 2:41 left until halftime, the Hawkeyes ended up going for the jugular. Stanzi completed a 56-yard pass to tight end Brad Herman, and Robinson scored from two yards out to give Iowa a 30-0 halftime lead.

Stanzi finished the afternoon completing 11-of-15 passes for 190 yards. Even more impressive are his season numbers, which through eight games consist of 19 touchdown passes to just two interceptions.

The 6-4 signal-caller would find wide receiver Marvin McNutt for a 22-yard touchdown pass to increase the lead to 37-0. Michigan State would finally score on the first play of the fourth quarter when Cousins found B.J. Cunningham for a 6-yard touchdown toss. The Spartans attempted a 2-point conversion and came up short.

Iowa ended up holding Michigan State's offense to a total of 258 yards on the day.

"The whole season, they've been a second half team," defensive end Adrian Clayborn said. "We had to keep our foot on the gas."

Now back in the thick of the Big Ten race, the Hawkeyes open a two-game stretch away from Kinnick Stadium, beginning Nov. 6 with a contest at Indiana. The Hoosiers will come into their Senior Day at 4-4, but winless in the Big Ten at 0-4.

"We're 0-0 going into next week," Hyde said. "We got to go to Indiana. They're a good team. They're a tough team. We're 0-0 going into next week, and we just got to play hard."