

11/1/2010: Indiana "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 Indiana Hoosiers, who will entertain the 15th-ranked Hawkeyes on Nov. 6 at Memorial Stadium in Bloomington, Ind.

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Last weekend, after covering Iowa's 37-6 victory over Michigan State, I went back and watched Indiana's 20-17 loss to Northwestern on Oct. 30 for the first time in its entirety.

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

Offense

Like most of the teams in the Big Ten this season, Indiana has a true leader in quarterback Ben Chappell, and he is a major reason why the Hoosiers' offense clicks.

The one facet of Chappell's game that truly stands out is his arm strength. This can be both a gift and curse, however. I say that because on one hand, he has the strength to not only get throws off as he gets hit, but those throws can be deep, and if the receivers are running proper routes, they can potentially make big plays. On the other hand, this could be a curse of sorts because receivers could be dropping some passes simply because of the velocity they come in at. Chappell has the ability to put some zip on his throws.

I like how Chappell knows the offense. Indiana runs a pistol set, which is simply where the quarterback lines up about 2-3 yards from under center instead of the usual five yards in a shotgun set, and the running back can line up behind him still as if he were under center. It's an offense that can be effective if done right. If the personnel isn't there, it doesn't work.

But back to Chappell and Indiana specifically. I thought he demonstrated his knowledge of the Hoosier offense very well in this game. There were a couple of instances on Indiana's 16-play touchdown drive in the first half of this game against Northwestern where he was leading his receivers, directing them where to be because he was going to put the football right there. He isn't the most mobile quarterback by any means – his arm is undoubtedly Chappell's best attribute – but when he has to run, he can certainly do so. The senior signal-caller had one touchdown on the ground to give Indiana a 10-7 lead late in the first half.

Chappell had one interception, and it was simply a poor read. It wasn't as if he threw a wounded duck or anything. It was simply a miscommunication between him and his intended target, and the Wildcat defender made a great read and stepped right in to intercept the pass.

As far as his best and worst are concerned, Chappell is at his best when he has time to throw. When he got good protection from the offensive line – which was more often than not – he was able to make good reads down field and hit open receivers. That being said, Chappell was at his worst when Northwestern was able to apply pressure defensively, and as a result, there were a lot of incomplete passes, some of which were the result of this pressure, which led to Chappell throwing passes off balance and putting too much on his throws.

Indiana really doesn't have much of a running game, period. But when it was a strong suit for the Hoosiers in this game,

they were able to not only find balance, but score points, especially in the first half.

The receiving corps is something to pay close attention to. Damarlo Belcher proved to be Chappell's go-to target more often than not in this game against the Wildcats, especially in third-down situations. Chappell isn't one to force his throws to specific receivers, but when the Hoosiers could get a passing attack going, a big reason why was because of Belcher. Another receiver that needs to be accounted for is Tandon Doss. He didn't have the best game by any means against Northwestern. In fact, he dropped a deep pass that would've resulted in some points instead of the lone pick Chappell threw. But he did make one nice catch early on in Indiana's 97-yard scoring drive on a third-down play.

I wouldn't say the Hoosiers have the best set of receivers Iowa is going to face, but it's a unit that if Chappell has time to throw, he can get them the football and they are certainly capable of making big plays. The one thing I will say is that I don't expect too many yards after catch from these receivers, simply because they didn't get enough of them against a team such as Northwestern.

The offensive line wasn't bad by any means, but struggled when the Wildcats would apply pressure (blitz). For the most part, pass protection was real good in this game, and they shouldn't be responsible for the one mistake Chappell did make in the second quarter.

Defense

I'm going to be honest. I was not at all impressed by this Indiana defense.

There are some talented players on this side of the football for the Hoosiers, and they are capable of making big plays when needed. But one thing I really took away from watching them against Northwestern is that most of the plays made had

to do with being able to win some battles inside the trenches.

The Wildcats aren't much of a running team, yet they were able to break a couple of big runs on this Indiana defense. From a schematic standpoint, the Hoosiers run a base 4-3 most of the time. There are instances where there will only be three down linemen and either an extra linebacker or extra defensive back, but this was rare for the most part.

Now I mentioned the yards Indiana allowed on the ground. To be fair, I think part of it has to do with only having seven men in the box against Northwestern's offense. I would think against a team like Iowa that maybe the Hoosiers would have a safety or corner creep up to take away the run, but that wasn't something that happened much in this particular game.

I also bring this up because I felt that because Indiana was winning some of the battles in the trenches, the Hoosiers were able to get pressure on Wildcat QB Dan Persa. However, he also has the ability to make plays with his feet, and he made some really big throws on the run against this defense.

Indiana has one really talented linebacker in Tyler Replogle, who leads the team in tackles with 56 of them this season. A couple of other guys who stood out were defensive end Darius Johnson, who led the Hoosiers with 11 tackles in this game, and linebacker Jeff Thomas, who recorded 10 tackles.

As far as Indiana's secondary is concerned, the Hoosiers have decent players in their defensive backfield. However, this is clearly the biggest area of weakness in this defense. I saw Northwestern receivers making tremendous catches and getting yards after catch on them as well. Even if the running game is working against Indiana, there is never going to be a bad time to throw passes of 10 or more yards on this defense, because those plays are going to be there.

Overall, one major concern I have with the Hoosiers defensively is that I saw some players do an absolutely

atrocious job of tackling. A perfect example of this came in the first half. There was a play where I believe it was Johnson who had Persa sacked. But he didn't wrap up properly, and while two other players were there to hit Persa, one of them ended up grabbing him by the face mask, which negated the play altogether. If the first guy wraps him up correctly, that's one less penalty and more time for your offense to execute.

Special Teams

Indiana's special teams are not that good by any means. I don't have any issues with their punt or kickoff return coverage. That was fine. It's everything else.

The Hoosiers, like every team Iowa has played this season, run that swinging gate punt formation that when first introduced, was designed for punters who kicked rugby-style. Indiana doesn't have a rugby-style punter, and this incredibly dumb punting formation (sorry but I appreciate what I see from teams like Iowa and about every NFL team there is) led to a blocked punt. Now fortunately for Indiana, the result of this was only a field goal. But the Hoosiers lost by three points.

As for the punter himself, one thing I noticed was that he kicks a fair amount of line drive punts. Because of the low hang-time, opportunities present themselves for punt returners to make big plays. I also found Indiana's kickoff coverage to be a bit vulnerable.

There was also a missed field goal by the Hoosiers in this game, where the kicker simply kicked the football straight when it was lined up on the left hash mark. The snap and hold were fine. To be fair, he did make a field goal on Indiana's opening possession.

Coaching

Bill Lynch didn't call a bad game by any means, but didn't

call a great one, either. My biggest issue with Lynch was there were two occasions in this game where he called a designed QB draw on third down, and both times, Chappell was stopped short. First of all, why you would ever call a designed run play for your quarterback when you run a pistol offense is beyond me, especially when mobility isn't your quarterback's strong suit.

The other thing is the first time he did this, Indiana had 3rd-and-2 from the Northwestern 3-yard line on the Hoosiers' first offensive series, which got them a field goal. If that's going to be called, it shouldn't be on 3rd-and-short inside the 5-yard line, especially when your passing game is what was proving most successful on that drive.

Strengths

- Chappell's arm strength*
- Ability to move the football at will early on*
- Doing a good job of sticking to what works*

Weaknesses

- Secondary susceptible to big plays*
- Less than stellar special teams play*
- Lack of running game*

Final Thoughts

Iowa should be able to go into Memorial Stadium this weekend and win this game by double-digits. But I'll voice my reasons why I believe this is a classic "trap" game as well.

The Hawkeyes are coming off big games at home the last two weeks that can be emotionally draining given the highs and lows of the past two games. This game also comes before a revenge game at Northwestern next week and two weeks before

what could potentially be a mammoth showdown against Ohio State at home. Finally, it's important to note that with this being the Hoosiers' Senior Day (Indiana's home game against Penn State was moved to FedEx Field in Landover, Md.) and with Indiana coming in 4-4, this game is not only important in terms of whether the Hoosiers can become bowl-eligible, but if Lynch will even be able to survive after this year as the team's head coach.

Indiana showed against Northwestern it is capable of moving the ball effectively early on and being able to put up points after one series. In fact, the Hoosiers did just this a year ago when they played at Iowa, and it took a ridiculous pick-six by Tyler Sash and a fourth quarter rally unlike anything I had ever seen at the college level for the Hawkeyes to emerge with an 18-point win.

Obviously, the first key for Iowa is being prepared right from the start, especially with this being the first early kickoff the team has played in over a month. This is important because one, you want to be able to build off the success that was there against Michigan State last week, and two, you don't want Indiana being able to dictate how this game unfolds like the Hoosiers were sort of successful doing a year ago.

Offensively, the player I think Iowa is going to be heavily depending on in this game is Adam Robinson. Keep in mind that Robinson missed last year's game against Indiana due to an ankle sprain, and as a result, Brandon Wegher (who is currently not with the team) ended up starting.

Another interesting point to bring up is this: The last two seasons, a true freshman running back has been able to crack over 100 yards rushing for the Hawkeyes against Indiana. Jewel Hampton did this two years ago in Bloomington during a 45-9 Iowa victory, and then Wegher went over the century mark last season. My reason for bringing this up is if the Hawkeyes do build a substantial lead and find themselves giving Marcus

Coker (a true freshman running back) some carries, you never know.

As far as the running game goes, Indiana was most susceptible to big plays on the ground against Northwestern when the Wildcats went up the middle. If the interior linemen get a good push for Iowa (and given the differences between the Hawkeyes' and Wildcats' offensive lines, I'll go ahead and say Iowa's is better), then I could see Robinson and maybe even Coker both having big games.

I'm pretty sure we'll see Ricky Stanzi throw more than 15 passes like he did last week against Michigan State, but when Iowa does throw, Stanzi is going to have receivers and tight ends open and able to make big plays, especially when the offensive line gives him good pass protection. I don't think Stanzi will need to scramble as often as Persa did against Indiana last week, but he also has to be careful because this is the same team that got five interceptions on him a year ago.

Defensively, the key is getting pressure on Chappell. When someone on the defensive line or one of the linebackers is getting in Chappell's face, or he starts feeling them coming after him, the accuracy of his throws goes down significantly. Iowa's defense is one that if Chappell gets time to throw in the pocket, he'll easily carve it up. The Hawkeyes just simply can't allow him to do that. Pressure on Chappell will lead to either incomplete passes or interceptions.

I don't expect the Hoosiers to run the football much, so the key here is going to be shutting down this passing attack.

Finally, I mention how shaky Indiana's special teams looked. I think Iowa is certainly capable of a big special teams play in this game. Expect Colin Sandeman to actually get a few good opportunities on punt returns to maybe make something big happen for the Hawkeyes. Same goes for both Derrell Johnson-

Koulianos and Keenan Davis on kickoff returns.

This simply comes down to the players' focus, in my opinion. If the Iowa players keep their heads on straight and don't let the success they had against Michigan State last week get to their heads, then they should be fine. Again, it's going to be important for the Hawkeyes to punch Indiana in the mouth early like they did to the Spartans last week. If they can, Iowa should win comfortably.