

Hawkeyes dodge Hoosier bullet

By Brendan Stiles

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BLOOMINGTON, Ind. – There are moments in the game of football when it's all a matter of survival.

The No. 15 Iowa Hawkeyes found a way to survive inside Memorial Stadium on Saturday, defeating the Indiana Hoosiers, 18-13. The win puts Iowa at 7-2 overall, and more importantly, keeps the Hawkeyes in what has become a four-team race to win the Big Ten this season, moving to 4-1 in conference play.

This game appeared to be in doubt until the final 3:42. In a matter of three plays, Iowa went from being on its own 12-yard line trailing 13-12, to moving ahead of the Hoosiers when quarterback Ricky Stanzi hit wide receiver Marvin McNutt for a 52-yard touchdown reception with 2:50 left.

The play was one of six catches McNutt made on the afternoon for a total of 126 yards receiving.

"It was a play we kind of set up early with those two out routes," McNutt said, referring to the two catches made by Derrell Johnson-Koulianos that preceded his score. "Rick pumped it, found me wide open, and threw it in stride."

However, the Hoosiers had that 2:50 remaining, and nearly made the most of it.

Indiana got the football and continued to march down all the way to the Iowa 18-yard line. But this is when the defense clamped down for the Hawkeyes.

After three straight incomplete passes from Hoosier quarterback Ben Chappell, Indiana faced 4th-and-10. As Chappell went back to throw, he found wide receiver Damarlo

Belcher wide open in the end zone.

Belcher looked to make the catch that would've stunned the Hawkeye faithful making the trek to Bloomington. But just as he started coming down with the ball, he was hit by safety Brett Greenwood and failed to come down with the catch that would've won the game for Indiana.

"We were lucky to make enough plays," Greenwood said. "But we'll take it."

Iowa looked like it would be in control of the game right from the start, but the Hawkeyes were forced to settle for a 23-yard field goal on its opening series to go up 3-0. It was one of four field goals that true freshman kicker Michael Meyer made for Iowa.

Indiana managed to respond with a 37-yard field goal of its own to tie the game at 3-3. Then came the lone mistake of the day from the Hawkeye offense, when Stanzi threw an interception at a diving Greg Heban. But Iowa would get the ball right back when Greenwood made an interception on a pass tipped by linebacker Jeremiha Hunter, who made his first start back since injuring his leg against Wisconsin back on Oct. 23.

Meyer would make his second field goal of the afternoon from 27 yards out the following possession, which was dominated by Iowa's ground game. True freshman running back Marcus Coker got the start in the place of a concussed Adam Robinson, and made the most of it. Coker carried the ball 22 times for 129 yards on the ground, and cracked the century mark during the first half. He's also the third straight true freshman running back the Hawkeyes have had rush for over 100 yards on Indiana.

"Marcus was called upon today and really carried more than his share of the load," said Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz, who reached the 100-win plateau as a college football head coach with this victory. "It was really the first extensive time that he has had, and it was impressive."

Iowa had a chance to reclaim the lead before halftime after the Hoosiers tied it at 6-6, but Meyer ended up missing a field goal attempt from 22 yards out. He would redeem himself though with another 27-yard field goal that put the Hawkeyes ahead 9-6, but that's when the momentum shifted in Indiana's favor.

The Hoosiers marched 69 yards down the field and Chappell would run in from one yard out to give Indiana a 13-9 lead it took into the fourth quarter.

Meyer would then make a career-long 42-yard field goal attempt to trim Iowa's deficit to one point, then the defense finally held the Hoosier offense in check.

And that's when the Hawkeyes managed to seize the game.

"It just feels like we're going to win the game, no matter what happens," junior safety Tyler Sash said.

Now with three games remaining, Iowa remains in the hunt for a Big Ten crown after escaping with this win. Next week, the Hawkeyes have a chance to seek revenge against a Northwestern team that has won the last two meetings. Kickoff from Ryan Field in Evanston, Ill., is scheduled for 11 a.m. on Nov. 13. The game will be televised by either ESPN or ESPN2.