

Hawkeyes lose another heartbreaker to Buckeyes

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – While the game didn't come down to a game-winning field goal in overtime like last year's contest at "The Horseshoe," the margin of victory was similar.

For the second straight year, three points was the difference, as No. 8 Ohio State defeated No. 21 Iowa, 20-17. The loss drops the Hawkeyes to 7-4 overall and 4-3 in the Big Ten. Meanwhile, the Buckeyes can clinch a share of their sixth straight conference title next week, as they sit in a three-way tie with No. 6 Wisconsin and No. 11 Michigan State.

"We didn't do some things well enough to win," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said. "They played hard and competed, and that's all you can ask against a very good team."

Iowa struck first late in the opening quarter when senior quarterback Ricky Stanzi threw his lone touchdown pass of the game 19 yards to junior wideout Marvin McNutt. The 7-0 Hawkeye lead carried over into the second quarter with the Buckeyes marching on the ensuing drive.

Ohio State got down to the Iowa 1-yard line, but was forced to settle for an 18-yard field goal from last year's hero Devin Barclay, trimming its deficit to 7-3. The Hawkeyes squandered a chance to build on this lead before halftime when freshman kicker Michael Meyer missed a field goal from 40 yards, but the Buckeyes failed to capitalize when quarterback Terrelle Pryor was picked off in the end zone by sophomore cornerback Micah Hyde.

However, Ohio State did take its first lead of the game on the opening drive of the second half when Pryor found Reid Fragel for a 5-yard score, putting the Buckeyes ahead 10-7. Meyer would redeem himself and tie the game with a 31-yard field goal for Iowa, and for the second straight season, the Hawkeyes entered the fourth quarter of a game against Ohio State tied at 10-10.

This time around, it would be Iowa breaking the tie. The momentum began to shift in the Hawkeyes' favor when Pryor threw his second interception of the afternoon to junior cornerback Shaun Prater, allowing Iowa to set up shop from the Buckeye 27-yard line.

"I think one of those 'backers tipped it, I caught it, and just tried to hit up the field to the right side," Prater said.

Two plays later, freshman running back Marcus Coker would give the Hawkeyes a 17-10 lead with 11:53 remaining on a 1-yard touchdown run.

Coker, who started the game after sophomore running back Adam Robinson was benched for the first quarter because of what Ferentz called "academic indigestion," finished with 70 yards on nine carries, and the touchdown run was the first of his Hawkeye career.

"He has really done a great job," Ferentz said about Coker. "To me, today was his most impressive outing.

"Thought he made a good showing of himself, so you've got to give him a lot of credit."

Ohio State would cut the lead to 17-13 when Barclay made a career-long 48-yard field goal. Following a 3-and-out by the Iowa offense, the Buckeyes regained possession of the football with 6:05 left on the clock. After Ohio State wideout DeVier Posey dropped a go-ahead touchdown pass from Pryor, the

Buckeyes elected to go for it on 4th-and-10 from the 50-yard line. Pryor managed to escape the pocket, found the outside, and picked up the first down.

“They just made one heck of a play,” senior defensive lineman Christian Ballard said. “I think we did a good job of getting him out of the pocket and making him feel uncomfortable. It just happened that a couple of their guys made some key blocks on Karl [Klug] and Adrian [Clayborn], and he was able to break it for 10 yards.”

The drive would be capped by Ohio State running back Dan Herron, who scored from two yards out to give the Buckeyes a lead with 1:47 on the clock.

Iowa would have one final chance to drive down the field, but Stanzi’s 4th-down completion to McNutt ended up being two yards short of a first down, ending any hopes of a Hawkeye comeback.

“I thought I had got it,” McNutt said. “When I looked up and saw I was two yards shy, I was pretty disappointed in myself.

“It’s something that I wish I could go back and do over again.”

With the home slate now complete, Iowa will look to end its two-game losing streak at Minnesota on Nov. 27. Kickoff from TCF Bank Stadium in Minneapolis is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. Central, and the game will be aired on the Big Ten Network.