

Losses continue to follow similar script (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – If the losses during this 2010 Iowa football season were like a cartoon, they would be a six-minute Looney Tunes clip featuring Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote.

In those classic cartoons, it didn't matter how many Acme products Wile E. Coyote was using. The end result was always the same – Instead of catching Road Runner, he'd fall off a cliff.

When it comes to this year's Hawkeyes, who entered Saturday's contest against Ohio State ranked 21st, not only is Iowa coming up just short in its defeats this fall, but the script has almost always been the same. Saturday's game proved to be no exception as the eighth-ranked Buckeyes dealt the Hawkeyes another gut-wrenching 20-17 defeat at Kinnick Stadium.

It doesn't seem to matter who Iowa is playing when facing these circumstances, which the Hawkeyes have faced five times. With the exception of a dropped touchdown pass by Indiana two weeks ago, the end result for Iowa has been a fall from grace that has kind of been like going off a cliff and into a canyon.

The frustration level inside the locker room is visible.

"I still can't believe... we're not 'a four-loss team.' Even though we are, we're a good team," sophomore cornerback Micah Hyde said. "They got the best of us today and they played a good game."

But with that frustration comes some explanation as to why a

team that won a BCS bowl game last year is now suddenly not coming through in close games.

“There were some points at some times during the season where we didn’t play up to our capabilities,” senior defensive lineman Christian Ballard said. “It was either defense, offense, or special teams. Sometimes we didn’t click on all three cylinders.

“We’re still playing tough and hard every single week. We’re a good team, but we just didn’t make the plays that we needed to at times.”

While the defeats have been excruciating in 2010, there is one statistic that this team could hang its hat on. Since the 2008 season began, Iowa has lost 10 games. All 10 of those defeats were by a touchdown or less.

For players like junior safety Tyler Sash, it’s seeing the Hawkeyes in a position to win every week that makes the losses a little less painful.

“It feels like if we do lose a game, we’re in the game the whole game,” Sash said. “I’m proud of my guys, and we’re going to keep battling.”

Now just two games remain on Iowa’s schedule – a trip to Minnesota next week, followed by a third straight bowl game. The message players such as Ballard wants his teammates to know is that four losses, no matter how heartbreaking they all are, isn’t bad for one season if the number “9” is in front of it under the win column.

“We were 9-4 when I was a sophomore and 11-2 last year. Now we have a chance to be 9-4 again,” Ballard said. “I think it’s a really good thing to say. It’s a really good record to have. It’s something that we’re going to have to explain to the team – that 9-4 isn’t bad at all.”