

Inconsistencies, lack of execution tarnish 2010 (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Coming into the 2010 season, expectations were high for the Iowa Hawkeyes.

With an Orange Bowl trophy to its name and a plethora of talent from last year's squad returning, there was good reason for all the optimism surrounding the program.

It's amazing how 12 games changes things.

With the regular season complete, there is no Big Ten title, no talk of Pasadena and the Rose Bowl. Instead, the Hawkeyes sit with at least three other teams (possibly four after next week) in the conference at 7-5 overall after falling to Minnesota on Saturday at TCF Bank Stadium.

As the Hawkeyes look back on this 2010 campaign, two things stand out in their eyes – inconsistency and lack of execution.

Iowa senior offensive lineman Julian Vandervelde said the inconsistency, especially from units such as his, proved to play a critical factor late in the season.

"Inconsistency has been our biggest problem this year," Vandervelde said after summing up the offensive woes throughout the season. "We can put together like at Indiana or Northwestern, we had one drive of three pass plays, boom-boom-boom down the field, touchdown. But then the rest of the game, we're grinding and we're grinding and we're grinding, and it just seems like we're not getting it, like we're running in

quicksand.”

As for the defense, what has been made clear is that the struggles that have existed throughout the team’s recent downslide has basically been mental. This has clearly been proven by all of the late fourth-quarter drives this Iowa defense has surrendered in all five losses this season.

“If you get beat physically, then you get beat physically,” senior defensive end Adrian Clayborn said. “If you get beat mentally, that’s a whole different thing. I think that’s what it has been.”

“That’s what the coaches have stressed,” added senior linebacker Jeremiha Hunter. “They know we can do it physically. It’s just a matter of mentally, as far as mental reps off. [Minnesota] just came out and executed better than we did.”

So the question now becomes – why has mental preparation not been up to par this year, like it has in years past. The answer might to this might not be nearly as definitive, but nevertheless, it’s an answer the Hawkeyes would prefer to have sooner than later with a bowl game on the horizon.

“I really can’t put my finger on one specific thing,” Vandervelde said. “It seems like every game has its own challenges. One game it’s penalties, one game it’s turnovers, one game it’s missed assignments.

“If we go back to look at the tape, and just look at it as tape, I don’t think we’re doing what we need to do and we’re not getting any better.”