

2011 Spring Football position breakdowns: Tight Ends (premium)

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Since Kirk Ferentz took over as Iowa's head coach prior to the 1999 season, the Hawkeyes have had a long lineage of tight ends that have not only gone on to be successful in the Black and Gold, but reach the next level. Former tight ends such as Dallas Clark, Erik Jensen, Scott Chandler, Brandon Myers, and Tony Moeaki have all been drafted by NFL teams, and there's a chance that later this month, Allen Reisner will be able to carry on in that legacy.

As Iowa looks ahead to 2011, tight end will be an intriguing position. The void left behind by Reisner, a guy who found himself playing much earlier than anticipated during the early part of his career, is bigger than one may have imagined it would be entering 2010.

Reisner was the No. 1 tight end last year as a senior and caught 42 passes for 460 receiving yards and two touchdowns. What also made him a key piece to Iowa's success was his ability to block downfield.

From a schematic standpoint, the good news for the Hawkeyes is that Ferentz and his coaching staff find themselves involving multiple tight ends throughout the course of a game. This is why Reisner emerged into a team leader by the time he was a senior, and it's why Brad Herman will have the opportunity to have a solid senior year in 2011.

Last season, Herman came on the scene as Iowa's second tight

end when many figured that would be a role played by C.J. Fiedorowicz, and finished with nine catches for 154 receiving yards. In fact, because of the sets Iowa tends to use that involve multiple tight ends, Herman and Reisner were both credited with starting in the Hawkeyes' 27-24 Insight Bowl win over Missouri last December.

One thing Herman mentioned earlier this week when he spoke to the press was how he has developed a strong rapport with junior quarterback James Vandenberg. What this should signify is that Herman's odds of remaining the No. 1 tight end throughout the rest of spring and into the fall (barring injury) look to be pretty good.

As for the aforementioned Fiedorowicz, expect him to be used in the role Herman was used in last year when Iowa does use multi-tight end sets. His biggest contributions last season were pretty much on special teams, but Fiedorowicz was highly-touted coming out of high school, and being listed at 6-7, 265 pounds, one would have to think that he'll take a big leap in 2011 as well and position himself to be the Hawkeyes' top tight end in 2012.

Another name to keep an eye on at the tight end position is junior Zach Derby, who comes in listed at 6-3, 240 pounds. Although he doesn't have the intangibles that many see with Fiedorowicz, Derby has been in the program long enough that he could end up being useful if he ever gets called upon.

Tight end production will be critical this season due to the changing of the guard at quarterback to Vandenberg. But this is where having a senior like Herman as your No. 1 guy could prove beneficial, and if Fiedorowicz manages to live up to the lofty expectations placed on him when he first arrived on campus, the future will continue to be bright for Iowa tight ends.