

# 2011 Iowa position breakdowns: Defensive Line (premium)

\*Every day this week, *HawkeyeDrive.com* will be previewing the 2011 version of the Iowa Hawkeyes position-by-position. After discussing the offense in Parts [One](#), [Two](#), and [Three](#), Part Four in our seven-part series begins the focus on this year's defense, starting with the defensive line.\*

By Brendan Stiles

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Of all the storylines surrounding this year's Iowa football team, perhaps none are more intriguing than the situation with the defensive line.

Gone are the likes of Adrian Clayborn, Christian Ballard and Karl Klug – all of whom were selected in the 2011 NFL Draft. This trio of linemen had a combined total last season of 152 tackles, 25 tackles for loss, 12 sacks and three forced fumbles.

In other words, a lot of attention is being spent this month figuring out where among this year's crop of D-linemen the Hawkeyes will get similar numbers from.

Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said as many as 6-8 defensive linemen could be part of the rotation for the Hawkeyes in 2011. The uncertainty might parallel the 2005 season when guys like Mitch King and Matt Kroul first provided an impact up front, but defensive line coach Rick Kaczinski notices some things that are different from what Iowa dealt with six years ago.

"The difference between 2005 and this year is you have guys

that have been in the program awhile,” Kaczinski said. “You have some fourth and fifth year guys that now it’s their time to get on the field. You’re not throwing some guy who just came off the street as a true freshman or redshirt freshman out there into the fire.

“They know the system where now, you’re just concentrating on technique and how to make them better. You’re not teaching them to get into a stance or how to line up. They know all those things, so now let’s work on the things that are going to make them better on Saturday.”

On the plus side for Iowa, a pair of seniors with previous starting experience are back in defensive tackle Mike Daniels and defensive end Broderick Binns. These two players split who started last season depending upon whether the coaches wanted to use Ballard at end (where he started in 2008) or at tackle (where he started in 2009).

Daniels burst onto the scene in 2010, starting eight of Iowa’s 13 games and finishing the season with 40 tackles, 11 of which were for a loss of yards. He also recorded four sacks, which was second to Klug’s 5.5 sacks. Binns had 36 tackles and a pick-six against Arizona to tie that game before Iowa ultimately lost 34-27.

Now both get an opportunity to not only start an entire season at their respective positions, but also a chance to provide the leadership that’s no longer there from any of the aforementioned former players.

At the defensive end spot formerly occupied by Clayborn, senior defensive end Lebron Daniel has been listed as the starter atop Iowa’s preseason 2-deep. However, head coach Kirk Ferentz confirmed during Iowa’s Media Day on Aug. 5 that Daniel, along with sophomore linebacker Dakota Getz, would have limited contact during the early part of fall camp.

“He’s a good pass-rusher, and I think he’s better than I am, I

believe,” Binns said. “He gets low into the ground. He has good hands, good quickness off the ball. In that sense, on third down, I think he’s going to be a definite asset.”

Then there’s the question as to who starts at defensive tackle alongside Daniels. The two names to keep an eye on are sophomore Dominic Alvis and redshirt freshman Carl Davis.

Alvis has drawn comparisons among coaches and players alike to Klug, mainly due to his versatility playing either tackle or end, as well as his motor. He comes into this season listed at 6-4, 255 pounds. He originally came to Iowa two years ago weighing 220 pounds.

“It has been a transformation,” Alvis said. “I had to change my eating habits, and my training regime is obviously at a premiere level that you’d expect from Coach Chris Doyle.”

As for Davis, he too put on 20 pounds during the summer and is now listed at 315 pounds, giving the Hawkeyes some beef they haven’t had, according to Kaczinski, since former defensive lineman Colin Cole back in 2002.

“We’re hoping Carl can fill space in there,” Kaczinski said. “It’s nice having a 300-pound guy. He might not get worn out quite as quick. But we don’t have things specifically that we’re going to do just because we’re playing with a bigger guy now.”

Other names that could be seeing the field in 2011 include seniors Thomas Nardo and Joe Forgy, juniors Steve Bigach and Joe Gaglione, redshirt freshman Mike Hardy, and true freshmen John Raymon and Darian Cooper.

Binns thinks this somewhat new approach of using more guys up front this season could potentially have benefit both short-term and down the road.

“I think it’s going to help us in the long run, and it’s going

to help the team in general, just to get the younger guys some game experience and just some experience overall," Binns said.