

2011 Big Ten football previews: Indiana (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

So far, we have previewed [Ohio State](#), [Illinois](#) and [Wisconsin](#). The next Big Ten team we will examine is the Indiana Hoosiers. Iowa plays its Homecoming Game against Indiana at Kinnick Stadium on Oct. 22.

There's a different vibe around Bloomington now. Following a 2010 campaign where the Hoosiers went 5-7 overall and 1-7 in Big Ten play, Bill Lynch was shown the door after four years, and Indiana replaced him with Kevin Wilson, who had spent the previous nine seasons as Oklahoma's offensive coordinator.

With Wilson in charge, the Hoosiers are going to be using a spread attack, a slight contrast from the pistol formation used by Lynch and his staff last year. This is what the Sooners were under his tutelage, and prior to arriving in Norman, he was an assistant for the late Randy Walker at Northwestern, who also used (and still uses) a spread offense. He is also one of five new head coaches in the Big Ten this season (counting Nebraska's Bo Pelini, as the Cornhuskers joined the conference this year).

From hearing him speak in person on a couple of occasions now (once being a one-on-one interview setting during the Big Ten spring meetings), I really believe Indiana has made a good hire here in Wilson. It might not show this season in terms of wins and losses, but my advice to the Hoosier faithful would be give this man a few seasons to work with, and I really think Indiana could become a program under his watch that some envisioned it becoming under Terry Hoeppner before he died in 2007.

Offensively, the most pressing need right now for the Hoosiers is to find a quarterback that can replace a three-year starter in Ben Chappell. Last season, Chappell led the Big Ten with 3,295 passing yards and was second to Iowa's Ricky Stanzi in touchdown passes with 24 of them. A quarterback battle has taken place this summer between sophomores Edward Wright-Baker and Dusty Kiel, and it looks as though Wright-Baker is going to get the nod. As a freshman, he completed 5-of-12 passes and had one touchdown and one interception. Kiel was 4-of-17 passing in 2010 and had a pair of interceptions.

The rest of the backfield is a complete toss-up right now, but there are two seniors that will really be the leaders among Indiana's playmakers on offense – wide receiver Damarlo Belcher and tight end Max Dedmond. Even with wideouts like Terrance Turner and Tandon Doss around last year, it was Belcher who led the Hoosiers in receiving with 78 catches and 832 receiving yards. His four touchdowns were third on the team in 2010, and he almost had a fifth that would've won a game against Iowa had the ball not slipped through his hands. Meanwhile, Dedmond only played in eight games and caught five passes, but two of his catches were for touchdowns.

With Wilson bringing in a spread offense, the Hoosiers will likely have three receivers on the field most of the time. Belcher is the big name offensively, but two other wideouts to keep an eye on in 2011 are sophomores Duwyce Wilson and Kofi Hughes. Wilson had 32 catches for 488 receiving yards and two touchdowns in 2010, while Hughes caught seven passes for 42 yards.

Up front, Indiana has three pretty valuable offensive linemen. Junior center Will Matte has started every game he has ever played. Senior left tackle Andrew McDonald started 11 games at the same position in 2010. Senior Justin Pagan has versatility and can play anywhere upon the line. Indiana's media guide had him listed at right tackle, but he has also gotten work in camp at right guard. Junior Marc Damisch started six games for

the Hoosiers last season and is listed as a starter this season.

Defensively, the Hoosiers were anemic last season. Perhaps no game from 2010 illustrated this better than a 63-point loss to Wisconsin where Indiana surrendered 83 points. The D-line lost Terrance Thomas, but returns a couple of players it will depend on in 2011. Senior defensive end Darius Johnson recorded 65 tackles and led the Hoosiers with 4.5 sacks last year, while junior defensive tackle Adam Replogle returns following a sophomore campaign that featured 32 tackles and two sacks.

The linebacking corps loses its leading tackler in 2010, Tyler Replogle. However, senior linebackers Jeff Thomas and Leon Beckum are back to anchor this year's group. Thomas recorded 82 tackles, a sack and two interceptions last year, while Beckum amassed 69 tackles and three sacks.

Indiana took its biggest hit defensively in the secondary, losing three starters from 2010 including strong safety Mitchell Evans, who led the Hoosiers with three interceptions. The lone returner is senior free safety Donnell Jones, who had 47 tackles last season, but he isn't listed as a starter on Indiana's current depth chart.

Special teams, the Hoosiers return sophomore kicker Mitch Ewald, who nailed 16-of-19 field goal attempts and all 33 of his extra-point attempts last year. Indiana will be replacing Chris Hagerup at punter, however, with junior Adam Pines.

As far as the schedule goes, Indiana has a chance to get off to a decent start in non-conference. The Hoosiers open the season with a game against Ball State that was originally slated as a road game, but has since been moved to Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, which is the site of the 2011 Big Ten Championship Game in December. The big non-conference game is Sept. 10 at Memorial Stadium, when the Hoosiers host Virginia,

a team that crushed Indiana in 2009, 47-7.

I mentioned before how I think Wilson can turn this program around, but I don't see it being this year necessarily. In Big Ten play, the schedule features a few games where Indiana could possibly sneak up on teams, but the road slate is daunting. The Hoosiers have to play at Wisconsin for the second straight season, as well as at Iowa, at Ohio State, and at Michigan State. But the key stretch will be those first two home games against Penn State on Oct. 1 and Illinois on Oct. 8. Should the Hoosiers prevail in either or both of those contests at Memorial Stadium, maybe then could this team surprisingly win six games and become bowl-eligible.

Right now, I don't see it. But in the next year or two, it wouldn't surprise me if Indiana starts going down the right path in terms of on-field success.

[Indiana WR Damarlo Belcher](#)