

Hawkeyes conclude September slate on strong note

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – The outcome just never seemed to be in doubt on this brisk autumn afternoon.

The momentum from the end of last week's game against Pittsburgh carried over for the Iowa Hawkeyes, as they simply managed to impose their will on ULM, defeating the Warhawks 45-17 on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium. With the victory, Iowa now sits at 3-1 overall as the schedule now shifts to Big Ten play.

Iowa opened Saturday's contest the same way it ended the Pitt game, implementing a no-huddle offense that led to a nine-play scoring drive capped by a 1-yard touchdown run on 4th-and-Goal from junior quarterback James Vandenberg. During the drive, Vandenberg completed his first four pass attempts of the afternoon, including one to each of his top three targets – senior Marvin McNutt, junior Keenan Davis, and redshirt freshman Kevonte Martin-Manley.

"I think we got them on their heels a little bit, and that's something I think those receivers really thrive off of," Vandenberg said about executing the no-huddle. "They were really hot out of the gate again. That's something we just kind of built off of."

The defense fed off what the offense was providing. ULM would make it 7-3 on its opening series with a 43-yard field goal, but that would be the only scoring done by the Warhawks in the first half.

"[The fans] were ready for an up-tempo game," sophomore linebacker James Morris said following a 10-tackle performance. "There was a lot of energy."

Iowa didn't use no-huddle on its second drive, but it produced the same result when Vandenberg connected with McNutt for a 13-yard score on a fade route. It also featured another 4th-down conversion by Vandenberg using his feet, only this one came with the Hawkeyes at their own 49-yard line.

Sophomore running back Marcus Coker would then score the first of two touchdowns he had on the afternoon from four yards out to put Iowa ahead by 18 points. Then Vandenberg found McNutt again on another fade route resulting in a 17-yard touchdown catch and an embarrassed Warhawk defensive back.

McNutt would finish the game with 100 yards receiving on seven catches and is now just one touchdown reception shy of tying the school's all-time record of 21 career touchdown catches currently shared by former wideouts Danan Hughes and Tim Dwight. Vandenberg, meanwhile, finished 21-of-32 passing with 270 yards and three touchdowns through the air before eventually being taken out late in the fourth quarter.

"Vandenberg put the ball in the perfect position," McNutt said about his second touchdown catch. "I put my body in the right place. He made a great throw, and I just made the catch."

The Warhawks would score two touchdowns in the third quarter, but both scores were responded by the Hawkeyes with touchdowns of their own. Sophomore kicker Mike Meyer would tack on a 23-yard field goal in the fourth quarter to complete the scoring.

Iowa did all this in front of a sellout crowd, plenty of whom came wearing green shirts as a sign of support towards former safety Brett Greenwood, who remains hospitalized in Iowa City after collapsing during a workout two weeks ago at Pleasant Valley High School. The Hawkeyes also paid tribute to their former teammate by wearing a green decal on the back of their

helmets Saturday, and Greenwood's parents met the team in the locker room when the game concluded.

"He was a great teammate, and he's an even better person," said junior cornerback Micah Hyde, who started the first two games of this season at the free safety position Greenwood occupied from his redshirt freshman year on. "To be a football player, you got to keep fighting. That's what he's doing right now."

Following next week's bye, Iowa opens the Big Ten portion of its season on Oct. 8 against Penn State, a team it has won three straight meetings with. A kickoff time from Beaver Stadium in State College, Pa., will be set by the conference on Sept. 26.

"This probably comes at a good time," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said about the upcoming bye week. "We can regroup a little bit, think a little bit more about what we can do to best maximize how the guys are, what they are showing us, and see if we can't try to be a little bit more efficient as we go along."