

# Huskers humble Hawkeyes in first Big Ten clash

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

LINCOLN, Neb. – If Friday's contest between the Iowa Hawkeyes and Nebraska Cornhuskers is the beginning of a new annual rivalry, then Iowa has a ways to go in making it appealing.

Nebraska, who came in ranked 22nd, flexed its muscles on defense and did just enough on offense to beat the Hawkeyes 20-7 in a game that wasn't as close as the scoreboard at Memorial Stadium would've indicated. The loss caps a second straight 7-5 regular season for Iowa that includes a 4-4 record in Big Ten play.

On this afternoon, Iowa struggled to get any rhythm going on offense. The Hawkeyes only compiled 270 yards of total offense, and the one score – a late 2-yard touchdown run by sophomore running back Marcus Coker – was what prevented Iowa from being shut out for the first time since a 31-0 loss to Illinois in 2000.

Junior quarterback James Vandenberg completed 16-of-35 passes for 182 yards and threw a bad interception in the second half while being chased out of the pocket. Senior wide receiver Marvin McNutt finished with just four catches for 29 yards receiving.

"They do a really good job of cutting off in-routes and crossing routes," Vandenberg said. "They did that today, and it made it tough to shake some guys loose."

While Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz wouldn't go as far as calling it a turning point, the biggest moment of the game

came just before halftime. With the Hawkeyes trailing 3-0 in the second quarter, the Cornhuskers were able to execute a 80-yard scoring drive that lasted 15 plays (most of which came on the ground) and was capped by quarterback Taylor Martinez's touchdown pass to Kyler Reed. The series was also aided by a blatant pass interference call on senior strong safety Jordan Bernstine.

"If we were able to force those guys into a field goal, that would've definitely helped us out," senior cornerback and Omaha native Shaun Prater said. "It would have gave some of our guys confidence on the defense. But things happen, and we just have to put out the fire and keep moving forward."

Nebraska took the 10-0 lead with it into the locker room, and would get a field goal from kicker Brett Maher that made it 13-0 following a 12-play, 82-yard drive.

"It wears on you a little bit, but at the end of the day, I don't feel like that's the No. 1 contributing factor," sophomore linebacker James Morris said about the defense's issues getting off the field. "I feel like it was just a failure to execute the things that we had been coached to do. That's on us as players."

Vandenberg's interception in the fourth quarter led to the touchdown that put this game away for good when Cornhusker running back Rex Burkhead, who set a Nebraska record with 38 carries for 160 yards rushing, scored from two yards out to put Nebraska ahead 20-0.

Iowa now must wait until Dec. 4 to learn where it will be bowling this winter. Where it ends up could hinge on whether No. 17 Michigan beats Ohio State on Saturday and earns a BCS at-large bid with a 10-2 overall record.

But for now, the Hawkeyes will have to regroup. Ferentz said the team would be off until Nov. 29 and then get back to practices before beginning bowl prep for whoever Iowa ends up

drawing.

“Our focus today was coming in here and hoping to get the eighth win, and that’s not going to happen. It didn’t happen today,” Ferentz said. “So now we shoot for that in our next game out, and we’ll see what we can do about improving in the areas we didn’t play well enough in. We’ll see what we can do about growing and getting that eighth win.”