

Iowa vs. Northern Illinois (What to expect)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

To get you all ready for Saturday's game between Iowa and Northern Illinois, I put together a list of things you ought to know before these two face off at Soldier Field.

At the end, I'll provide what I think are three keys to an Iowa victory.

Iowa Hawkeyes (0-0) vs. Northern Illinois Huskies (0-0)

Soldier Field; Chicago, Ill.

Sept. 1, 2012

2:30 p.m. Central

TV: ESPNU (Tom Hart, John Congemi)

Radio: Hawkeye Radio Network (Gary Dolphin, Ed Podolak, Rob Brooks)

Weather: [79 degrees, rain, wind from E/NE](#)

Brendan's Three Keys to the Game:

1. Strong outing from D-line

If Iowa's going to win this game, it'll have to be because of the play of its defense and to be specific, the defensive line. While the front four is the Hawkeyes' most inexperienced group entering the 2012 season, it couldn't ask for a more favorable match-up this weekend with Northern Illinois featuring five new starters along its offensive line, three of

whom are redshirt freshmen. This is a game where Iowa's D-line should be able to create chaos throughout without the aid of blitzing from the back seven.

2. Trust the TEs

Kirk Ferentz has said repeatedly how the tight end group might be the biggest strength not just with this offense, but with the entire team. Iowa could be playing up to four tight ends on Saturday, the most notable being junior C.J. Fiedorowicz. Whether it's him, Zach Derby or even guys like Ray Hamilton or Jake Duzey, trusting these guys to play like they've practiced could go a long way in terms of Iowa not only winning this game, but maybe winning somewhat comfortably.

3. Leaders leading

This is the first time since 2007 that Iowa has opened a season somewhere other than Kinnick Stadium. Also, one of Ferentz's biggest talking points throughout the preseason has been how this is the youngest Hawkeye team he has coached in 14 years. With those two things in mind, this is a game where the leaders on this team need to set the tone. This is a game where Iowa should be counting on big games from players like James Vandenberg, James Morris, Micah Hyde, and anyone else on this team who is highly regarded by teammates. This is the time for those guys to show why they're all in the leadership positions they're in.