

Chippewas stun Hawkeyes in Kinnick

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, IOWA – Picture an Amana steak that's poorly cooked, only to go back on the grill and come out burnt and lacking the flavor Amana steaks typically have when cooked properly.

This might be the best analogy to what happened with the Iowa Hawkeyes on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium. An abysmal first half where everything that could've gone wrong did, combined with a colossal meltdown in the game's final minutes led to Central Michigan, not Iowa, walking off the field with a 32-31 win to the disappointment of 70,585 spectators expecting that good meal.

The Hawkeyes saw an eight-point lead collapse in the final 2:18 thanks to Central Michigan scoring a quick touchdown, recovering an onside kick, and nailing a 47-yard field goal with three seconds left to steal the victory from Iowa.

"We're just down about it," redshirt freshman right guard Austin Blythe said. "We just didn't do enough to win today. Give Central Michigan the credit. They just outplayed us."

While the special teams debacle is what will sting the most for the team and its fans, it was a series of unfortunate events for the Hawkeyes throughout the game that ultimately proved to be the difference in Iowa now sitting at 2-2 instead of at 3-1 entering Big Ten play next week.

Iowa got things going right away when senior quarterback James Vandenberg threw his first touchdown pass of the season on the opening drive – a 10-yard connection with sophomore wideout

Kevonte Martin-Manley that gave the Hawkeyes a 7-0 lead. But Central Michigan became the third straight team to score a touchdown on its opening drive against Iowa's defense to tie the game at 7-7.

The Hawkeyes took a 14-10 lead with them into the second quarter, only to leave their fans with that under-cooked steak at halftime. Central Michigan outscored Iowa 13-0 in that second stanza to take a 23-14 lead with it into the locker room. In that first half, the Chippewas had the ball for nearly 20 minutes and were 4-of-4 inside the red zone. Meanwhile, the Hawkeyes hadn't converted a single third down and racked up seven of their nine penalties on the day, including three personal fouls.

"That's tough to overcome," head coach Kirk Ferentz said. "That's tough to be a winning football team doing that, so I'd start right that."

Over the next 27:42, it looked as though Iowa had made the proper adjustments to leave its audience satisfied. During this stretch, Central Michigan could only muster a total of 85 yards on offense. Meanwhile, the offense got the ball rolling with Weisman scoring his second touchdown of the day from five yards out, and later picking up a 46-yard field goal being kicked into the wind by junior Mike Meyer that gave the Hawkeyes a 24-23 lead.

"I knew if I kept my head down and kicked it, it'd have a good leg swing and go in," Meyer said.

Weisman would score again to extend Iowa's lead to 31-23. In his first start at running back, the Buffalo Grove, Ill., native compiled 217 yards rushing on 27 carries to go along with his three scores.

"When you get him with a head of steam, he's a really good back," senior quarterback James Vandenberg said.

It looked like that once under-cooked steak was still going to come out nice for the Hawkeye faithful. Then came the steak getting burned – or in this case, the Iowa defense getting burned.

The Chippewas would score a touchdown with 45 seconds remaining to make it 31-29, but couldn't convert the 2-point conversion that would've tied it. Senior cornerback Micah Hyde got abused by Central Michigan wideout Titus Davis on his 13-yard TD catch, but was the one who made up for it by breaking up the 2-point try.

"They dialed up a good play and it's unfortunate they scored a touchdown," Hyde said. "The quarterback made a good play and stuck it right in his chest. After that, the two-point conversion, we were fortunate to get a stop. But we knew the game wasn't over."

Then came that onside kick. Actually, Central Michigan was called for a delay of game before an attempt that was actually recovered by junior tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz. Because it was a delay of game penalty, Iowa couldn't decline it and the Chippewas got a chance to re-kick it. Just as the ball went past the 40-yard line, it was touched by Central Michigan's Jesse Kroll. As it turned out, no one on Iowa would even get a hand on the onside kick attempt.

"Typically, some guys are assigned to go block the guys that are pursuing and other guys are assigned to catch," Ferentz said. "We looked very confused out there and that's not a good thing. Very indecisive."

After retaining possession, the Chippewas got their break when senior defensive end Joe Gaglione was called for a personal foul following an incomplete pass on 2nd-and-8. Instead of facing 3rd-and-8, Central Michigan had 1st-and-10 on Iowa's 39-yard line.

With eight seconds left, Chippewa kicker David Harman came on

the field on 3rd-and-1 to try a 47-yard field goal, which sailed straight and just above the crossbar, giving Central Michigan the one-point lead it wouldn't relinquish.

"It went down to the wire," senior wide receiver Keenan Davis said. "We know we fought. There's going to be a lot of stuff on the film we got to pay attention to, a lot of stuff we've got to get better on. Yeah, it's tough."

Now sitting at 2-2, Iowa hopes to cook something more satisfying for its fans Sept. 29 when it opens Big Ten play with its Homecoming game against Minnesota. The Golden Gophers have won each of the last two Floyd of Rosedale battles. Kickoff is scheduled for 11 a.m. Central.