

# Hawkeyes stun Spartans in double overtime

By Brendan Stiles

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EAST LANSING, Mich. – On a dreary day at Spartan Stadium, it was the Iowa defense providing a much-needed spark that ultimately enabled the Hawkeyes to emerge with a stunning 19-16 double overtime victory over Michigan State on Saturday.

The magnitude of this win for the Hawkeyes cannot be overstated. Not only is Iowa now 4-2 overall instead of 3-3, but at 2-0 in Big Ten play, it remains tied with Michigan atop the Legends Division.

“I’m just really proud of the way the guys hung in there with a good football team,” Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said after notching his 100th career victory at the school since taking over for Hayden Fry after the 1998 season. “It took basically every play out there.”

Iowa got off to an ugly start. Its first offensive possession featured a near pick-six on the second play and eventually, senior quarterback James Vandenberg would throw an interception that led to a 14-yard touchdown run by Michigan State running back Le’Veon Bell.

From that point forward however, Iowa’s defense clamped down. The Spartans looked like they’d make it 14-0 after quarterback Andrew Maxwell completed a 38-yard pass to wideout Aaron Burbridge. But Bell would be stopped short of a first down inside the red zone and Michigan State opted to take the points, making the game 10-0. Bell would finish the game with 140 yards rushing on 29 carries. In total, the Spartans compiled 328 yards of offense.

"We knew it was going to be a close game and we liked how we matched up," junior linebacker James Morris said. "Yards were tough to come by today. When that's case, you've just got to kind of batten down the hatches and pull together."

Iowa would respond right back. Junior wide receiver Jordan Cotton returned the ensuing kickoff for a touchdown, only for the play to be called back due to an illegal block in the back. The Hawkeyes would get the ball at the Spartan 47-yard line and would come away with a 23-yard field goal by junior kicker Mike Meyer, one of four kicks he made on the afternoon.

The score would remain 10-3 going into the fourth quarter. Iowa was in position to tie the game following a 31-yard run late in the third quarter by sophomore running back Mark Weisman, who rushed for 116 yards on 26 carries. Instead, the Hawkeyes were unable to move the chains and the two teams ended up exchanging field goals.

Trailing 13-6, the offense found its spark in the form of a 35-yard completion by Vandenberg to senior wide receiver Keenan Davis. Making the play even more significant was that it came on a 2nd-and-26 following a clipping penalty and moved Iowa into Spartan territory.

"That big play got us out to really good field position," Vandenberg said. "We're at midfield, four minutes left. There's zero rush. We don't have to get into multiple receiver sets. We could get in with our tight ends and keep that balance."

"I thought that was big – having that balance and making them honor both."

Once that happened, the Hawkeyes were able to tote the rock with Weisman, as he converted a pair of third downs. The first came on a 37-yard run to the Michigan State 8-yard line, the second resulting in a 5-yard touchdown run that tied the game with 55 seconds in regulation. Weisman's eighth score of the

season would be his final play of the afternoon though, as he left the game with what Ferentz called a lower leg injury that occurred on the run.

"I wanted to get back in, but I really couldn't," Weisman said. "It wasn't effective. I had no power off that leg, so I couldn't really cut off that leg.

"If I went back in, I would've hurt the team more than help the team."

Iowa won the overtime coin toss and the defense held Michigan State to a 24-yard field goal. The Hawkeyes would match that with Meyer connecting from 27 yards. The second overtime possession was nearly disastrous for Iowa. Vandenberg, who completed 19 of 36 passes for 134 yards, threw an incomplete pass on third down that would've been a Spartan interception if not for Cotton breaking up the pass.

Meyer would make his fourth field goal of the day when he nailed a 42-yard kick to give the Hawkeyes their first lead. Iowa would seal the win when senior cornerback Greg Castillo – who made his second straight start in place of an injured B.J. Lowery – intercepted a second-down pass from Maxwell that went off his intended target's hands.

"I just saw the ball in the air and I just caught it," Castillo said. "It was really that simple. I got lucky."

The Hawkeyes return home to play Penn State on Oct. 20. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. Central from Kinnick Stadium and will be televised nationally on BTN.