

COMMENTARY: Losing record telling (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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BLOOMINGTON, Ind. – There's an adage in football made famous by legendary NFL coach Bill Parcells – "You are what your record says you are." This is a line that has been used before by Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz and many others.

After losing its third straight game Saturday 24-21 to Indiana, the Hawkeyes left Memorial Stadium possessing a 4-5 overall record.

The aforementioned record adage applies here. Iowa is 4-5 and every bit the part of a 4-5 team. Following Saturday's defeat, Ferentz made clear that this particular loss to the Hoosiers wasn't because of lack of effort, and with regard to that, he's correct.

In fact, I'd take that a step further and say none of the Hawkeyes' losses, even the games where Penn State and Northwestern handily beat them, were due to lack of effort. Right now, they're just not a good football team.

Now obviously there are a myriad of reasons for this and they've all been well-documented. One could talk all they want about player attrition, poor recruiting, poor coaching, lack of execution. Yes, all of those things are valid reasons.

All of those things were brought up when this team was losing games, yet had a winning record. So now what? Obviously, things haven't gotten better and don't appear as though they're going to get better.

Iowa's 4-5 and needs to win two of its last three just to get

bowl-eligible. That's not happening. It's not because the Hawkeyes are going to pack it in. They won't. It's because two of those games are against the two teams currently sitting atop the Legends Division, and both Michigan and Nebraska are way ahead of Iowa at this point in time.

The Hawkeyes could lose to both those teams by the same three-point margin they lost to Indiana by on Saturday. It won't matter. A loss is a loss. There's no finding moral victories at this point in time. Not when Iowa's possessing a losing record of any kind for the first time since 2007, a year where every fifth-year senior on this team was still in high school.

What stood out to me most when Ferentz spoke after the game – besides the fact that when he spoke to the media was actually separate from the players; thank you, Indiana – was that he didn't act the way he usually does after losses. He said some of the same cliché lines, but there were also instances where he said what he was actually thinking and not giving a non-answer answer.

By no means did it seem like a sign of surrender. But it did seem like an acknowledgement of he knows what he's working with and has reached a point where only so much can be done. Even if the coaching gets better these last three weeks – and I'm talking about his entire staff here, not just him – it probably won't be enough.

This team isn't underachieving unless you had ridiculously high expectations for it coming into this season. It's just not a good one.

In this case, yeah. Iowa is what its record says it is.