

# COMMENTARY: A defensive disaster (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

ANN ARBOR, Mich. – What was once a proud defense is anything but.

For the fifth straight week, Iowa lost. This time, it was No. 23 Michigan imposing its will on the Hawkeyes to the tune of 42-17. For the fifth straight week, it was the Hawkeye defense surrendering 400-plus yards en route to defeat.

Michigan didn't just bully Iowa. It humiliated the Hawkeyes in "The Big House" on Saturday. The Wolverines scored touchdowns on their first six possessions of the game. They accumulated 513 yards of total offense, the most given up by Iowa at any point this season.

Not only that, but Michigan did this with its second-string quarterback, Devin Gardner, at the helm as Denard Robinson progressed his way back into game action Saturday for the first time in three weeks.

It didn't matter if the Wolverines were running the ball or throwing it. Heck, one could even argue that if Michigan didn't get too cute with some of its play-calling, it could've hung up 50-60 points on this Iowa defense.

But what made Saturday's showing worse than any other this season by the Hawkeye defense was that it didn't matter which 11 guys were on the field. It didn't make a difference if a three-year starter or a guy getting his first significant playing time was out there. Iowa was getting carved left, right and up the middle. If there was a hole or a lane,

Michigan found it and went full speed.

The most telling sequence of this game came in the second quarter. Michigan faced third down and Iowa went to a dime package, which hasn't really benefited the Hawkeyes at any point this season when they've faced mobile quarterbacks like the two possessed by the Wolverines. For instance, that 73-yard touchdown run Iowa gave up to Northern Illinois quarterback Jordan Lynch in the season opener came with the Hawkeyes in dime.

Gardner scrambled and picked up a first down, but the play was called back because of a holding penalty on Michigan. So on third-and-long, Iowa changed back to its base 4-3 defense and Gardner proceeded to connect with a wide open Roy Roundtree in the end zone for a Michigan touchdown.

It would only get worse from that point. The defensive line couldn't shed blockers, contain was practically non-existent and the secondary repeatedly got torched any time the Wolverines attempted to go vertical with their passing attack. Iowa was that bad.

When the same problems are taking place week after week, it's beyond the point of simply critiquing personnel or saying execution failed. The defensive scheme isn't working and it's that side of the ball that has been a letdown in at least five of Iowa's seven losses this season.

Forget about next week. There's no reason to think Nebraska won't move the ball like Michigan, or Purdue, or Indiana, or Northwestern, or Penn State all have on the Hawkeyes during Iowa's losing streak.

Going forward, adjusting to the personnel coming back is a must if this defense is going to be back to what it once was. If that means benching players that have started numerous games, so be it. If that means making a drastic schematic change, so be it. Something has to change here, or this

problem will go beyond this season.