

# COMMENTARY: No risk, no reward (premium)

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*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – As expected by many, the Iowa Hawkeyes lost their 2012 finale Friday at Kinnick Stadium, as No. 17 Nebraska secured its spot in next week's Big Ten Championship Game with a 13-7 victory.

No, it wasn't a blowout. Iowa fought, and fought and fought some more. But all for naught.

The reason why the Hawkeyes lost Friday afternoon is actually pretty simple. It starts and ends with coaching. There's the saying of "high risk, high reward," yet this proved to be a case of "no risk, no reward."

No one expected Iowa to win this game. Not even the blindly loyal optimists who always look at the positive side of things expected that. Yet the Hawkeyes were in a position on Friday where they could've shocked the college football world and perhaps maybe lay a foundation for a brighter future.

This was a team that could've quit Friday. After all, thousands of Nebraska fans had invaded their home turf to watch what they expected to be the Cornhuskers cruising to a coronation. Nebraska left with the prize it sought, but nothing about it was easy.

But there was one problem Iowa had. Aside from its opening possession where it marched 62 yards down the field for its only score of the day, the Hawkeye offense repeatedly shot itself in the foot at times where Nebraska could've really felt the pressure.

At the end of the first half, Iowa calls a timeout and comes out of it called for an illegal substitution penalty. There's simply no excuse for that. Short-yardage plays where Iowa runs the ball, it continued to run towards the sides Nebraska overloaded in the box.

The first of two interceptions thrown by quarterback James Vandenberg went off his receiver's hands, but his intended target – on third down, mind you – was running a route short of the first-down marker.

Defensively, the Hawkeyes played their best game in over a month. After allowing teams to accumulate over 400 yards of offense each of the past five weeks, the Cornhuskers only had 263 yards of total offense Friday. The defense didn't run a single play in nickel or dime. Not one. It may have held up its end of bargain, but had to lack creativity in order to do so. Eventually, Nebraska was going to get something going as it routinely pounded the football with running backs Ameer Abdullah and Rex Burkhead.

This loss is on coaching. Everyone knew of Iowa's shortcomings personnel-wise, which is a big reason why it entered this game 4-7 and a heavy underdog. As the game progressed and the Hawkeyes continued to draw blanks on what were golden opportunities, it was only a matter of time before Nebraska executed. That has kind of been the Cornhuskers' M.O. all season.

Iowa had nothing but pride at stake Friday afternoon. This was a chance for the Hawkeyes to roll the dice on both sides of the ball and they never did. Instead, they continued to play conservatively despite Nebraska practically giving the game away late with a pair of questionable passing calls on third down during the fourth quarter.

All the talk this week was about Iowa going out swinging. Instead, it took little to no risks on an afternoon when it

could afford to and in the end, a team that gave its all walked away with no reward to show for it.