

2013 Spring Football position breakdowns: Quarterbacks (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

For really the first time in the Kirk Ferentz era of Iowa football, the Hawkeyes have a complete mystery needing to be solved at the quarterback position before the 2013 season gets underway next fall.

With James Vandenberg graduating after taking snaps each of the past two seasons, a 3-way battle has presented itself this spring at signal-caller. What makes this even more intriguing is that while all three players in competition were on the roster and have a year's worth of experience under offensive coordinator Greg Davis, none of the three took any snaps for the Hawkeyes in 2012.

Perhaps having the slightest of edges right now mainly due to having two years on campus and thus two years in the Iowa football program is sophomore Jake Rudock. The Florida native redshirted in 2011 when Ken O'Keefe was still in charge of the Hawkeye offense and spent all of last season listed as Vandenberg's back-up on the 2-deep.

Meanwhile, the other two quarterbacks battling Rudock for the starting job both redshirted last season, but under different circumstances. Junior Cody Sokol played two seasons at Scottsdale Community College in Arizona before transferring to Iowa following the 2011 season. Because Sokol redshirted in 2012, he still has two years of eligibility remaining.

Then there's redshirt freshman C.J. Beathard, a Tennessee

native who was a late addition to Iowa's 2012 recruiting class. In fact, his commitment to Iowa came two days before National Signing Day and four days before O'Keefe resigned from his coaching duties to join Joe Philbin's staff with the Miami Dolphins.

The bottom line is there won't be an answer by the end of spring football as to who starts for Iowa in 2013. In all likelihood, this is a position battle that probably won't be decided until a week before the Hawkeyes' season opener against Northern Illinois.

But that doesn't mean there isn't a chance for some separation to take place and quite frankly, the best thing that could happen over the next three weeks here is for one of these three guys to start separating himself from the others. Regardless of which one of these guys it ends up being, any separation that can take place sooner than later will probably be a good thing for Iowa down the road.

Thinking back to prior quarterback competitions Iowa has had under Ferentz, the most recent (and probably most chronicled, to be honest) came in 2008 when there was debate over whether Jake Christensen or Ricky Stanzi should be under center. It wasn't until one-third of the 2008 season was completed before Ferentz finally went with Stanzi taking over for good. The longer this drags out, the more scrutiny there's going to be on Ferentz and his staff this fall.

The circumstances might be different for each guy though. In the case of someone like Sokol or Rudock, there might be more pressure to create a wider gap than on someone like Beathard, who'd have the advantage of having four years of eligibility should he end up being the reason why the competition to start at quarterback is neck-and-neck.

Once this is settled, one way or another, how the rest of Iowa's offense will project out in 2013 should become a bit

easier to decipher.