

# 2013 Spring Football position breakdowns: Tight Ends (premium)

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Before last season began, the talk at Iowa surrounding its tight end position was that it would be a position of strength, a position of depth and one that would be highly utilized in 2012.

The depth was there and the potential was there for it to be a strength for the Iowa offense. But it wasn't really utilized enough to be a strength, which was one of numerous factors why the Hawkeyes sputtered offensively last fall.

Looking at Iowa's tight end group this spring, the depth is there again. The only tight end from last season that isn't back is Zach Derby, who graduated. Otherwise, C.J. Fiedorowicz is back for his senior season and the Hawkeyes also bring back other key pieces such as junior Ray Hamilton and sophomores Jake Duzey and Henry Kreiger-Coble.

All four players had their moments last season, but the one who stands out is Fiedorowicz. Nearly one-third of his catches from a year ago came in the season's final two games against Michigan and Nebraska, and if he's able to carry that over into 2013, the potential is there for Fiedorowicz to possibly lead the Hawkeyes in receptions, depending on how things shake out in the receiving corps.

The other three tight ends mentioned are all going to see the field in some capacity this spring and fall, but the question becomes how much they will be used. Hamilton and Duzey saw

playing time early on last season, mainly in part because of their blocking. Meanwhile, Kreiger-Coble caught on towards the end of the season as a threat in the passing game.

Two other things are worth noting right now as it pertains to tight ends. One is that they basically have a new position coach in D.J. Hernandez, a graduate assistant who takes over for David Raih (now at Texas Tech) and is also the brother of New England Patriots tight end Aaron Hernandez. How much of an impact Hernandez has with this group as opposed to Raih's impact last season remains to be seen.

The other noteworthy item has to do with Iowa's 2-deep this spring, which listed a Y-back instead of the fullback many have been accustomed to seeing over the years. Duzey was listed as the No. 1 Y-back, with Kreiger-Coble right behind him. This is basically the equivalent of an H-Back, which is used in the NFL.

Looking more in-depth at this, it's really nothing new because the Hawkeyes had many instances last season where the use of two tight ends took place. The fact that Iowa is going as far as listing this on its 2-deep now suggests that the coaching staff recognizes its tight ends weren't used as frequently as they probably should have in 2012.

Between the uncertainty at quarterback and the question marks surrounding the receiving corps, it might be wise for the Hawkeyes to find ways for the tight ends to become more involved in the offense, especially if they become more run-oriented this fall given what's in place at running back. It doesn't hurt to have more blockers on the field and it wouldn't hurt this team to use these guys more if the coaches really do continue to view it as a strength of this offense going forward.