

2013 Spring Football position breakdowns: Defensive Line (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Looking at the Iowa defensive line, it appears – at least during this spring football period – to be somewhat of a mixed bag. The names are familiar and some aspects of it have potential to be promising for the Hawkeyes, but there are also some questions that need to be answered between now and Iowa's season opener on Aug. 31.

Right now, the most promising aspect of the Hawkeyes' defensive line is inside at the two tackle spots. While junior Louis Trinca-Pasat is sitting out of spring practices following surgery to repair a torn rotator cuff, he'll be the lead anchor inside once he's able to return for summer workouts and fall camp.

As for the players who are able to participate this spring, another guy who looks to be a leader inside is sophomore Darian Cooper after he played significant minutes for the Hawkeyes last season as a redshirt freshman. There's also the ongoing development of junior Carl Davis, who actually weighs more than he did last season but has trimmed down significantly this offseason in terms of his physique. Davis was somewhat behind the 8-ball last season after he had to sit out spring practices due to offseason surgery, but the coaches have been pleased with the amount of conditioning he has done over the last 5-6 months.

With others such as redshirt freshmen Faith Ekakitie and Jaleel Johnson entering the picture this offseason, depth

appears to be solid inside.

The questions surrounding the Hawkeyes center around the two end spots, but not because of who's likely to start. Dominic Alvis returns for his senior season and will likely be viewed as the leader of this group, while sophomore Drew Ott appears to be the favorite to hold down the other end spot after burning his redshirt during a game against Northwestern and seeing significant playing time during the month of November.

Alvis and Ott will likely be the two starters when Iowa opens its season against Northern Illinois (barring injuries of course), but then it's a matter of figuring out depth behind them. Neither player (and really, no one on this D-line) is equipped to play 70-75 snaps per game and with someone like Reese Morgan coaching this group, rotations along the defensive line should be expected again in 2013.

Among the names Iowa fans should be keeping a close eye on are players such as sophomores Mike Hardy, Riley McMinn and Melvin Spears. Another possibility to watch out for is someone like Ekakitie (who has gotten reps this spring working at end) moving over outside or any of the other defensive tackles Iowa has that are versatile enough to play both in and out.

The bottom line is this for the Hawkeyes – the play of their defensive line is key to this upcoming season. Last season exposed some of the weaknesses this group had and those weaknesses were on display against teams that could break contain regularly and carve apart the entire Iowa defense.

Any improvement out of the front four should (at least in theory) allow the Hawkeyes be a better team in 2013. Morgan's someone who constantly stresses fundamentals and while Iowa might have a better D-line in terms of doing the little things, it will still need to show it can make plays and take some of the pressure off the back seven.