

2013 Spring Football position breakdowns: Secondary (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

In assessing the Iowa secondary, the takeaway here is this group being one that while experienced, needs to prove something in 2013. The Hawkeyes have first-string players returning to the field this year, but they're doing so after what was a disappointing season for the entire defense.

This was a group that at times, played like the strength of the defense as it was expected to be last year. Then there were also times where the secondary was responsible for some of the big plays that torched the Iowa defense throughout the entire 2012 season. If there was anything disappointing about the defensive backs last fall, it was the inconsistency that seemed to show up at inopportune times during games.

One defensive back no longer around is Micah Hyde, who is heading off to the NFL after being a three-year starter that concluded with him being honored with the Woodson-Tatum Defensive Back of the Year award by the Big Ten. Considering the leadership role Hyde had, his absence is significant.

But that isn't to say there isn't leadership in this group, however. Barring injuries, Iowa will likely be starting two seniors in the secondary with B.J. Lowery returning at cornerback and Tanner Miller back at free safety.

Both players have proven serviceable during their careers. Miller has started the majority of the past two seasons, but his play last season paled in comparison to what it was as a

sophomore in 2011. Lowery started the majority of last season at the corner spot opposite Hyde and showed glimpses of the type of player he's capable of being this year.

Those guys will be expected to lead. Then there's junior safety Nico Law, who appears poised to get his golden opportunity at strong safety this year after spending the majority of last year behind Tom Donatell. If there was ever a time for everything to start clicking for Law, now would be that time.

As for replacing Hyde, the front-runner to start at corner is junior Jordan Lomax, who missed all of last season due to a shoulder injury. Lomax likely would've played significantly in nickel and dime packages for Iowa last season had he not been hurt, much like Lowery did two years ago after he returned from his wrist injury.

The Hawkeyes also have cornerbacks such as Sean Draper and Kevin Buford that both saw playing time as true freshmen in 2012, as well as junior safety John Lowdermilk in the event either Miller or Law play themselves out of a first-string spot.

One last thing worth noting is the coaching switch. Darrell Wilson is no longer around after taking a similar position at Rutgers last winter. Phil Parker, who is entering his second year as Iowa's defensive coordinator, will also assume his old duty of specifically coaching the secondary. If the workload doesn't prove to be too overbearing for Parker, this could potentially be a good thing for the Hawkeyes.

Iowa's secondary should be better in 2013, but the only way it's going to be is if the players who do get playing time make the most of their opportunities.