

# 2013 Iowa position breakdowns: Secondary

*\*This week, HawkeyeDrive.com presents an eight-part series of position breakdowns as the Iowa Hawkeyes continue preparing for the 2013 season. After previously focusing on [quarterbacks](#), [running backs](#), [wide receivers and tight ends](#), the [offensive line](#), [defensive line](#) and [linebackers](#), our seventh part examines the team's secondary.\**

By Brendan Stiles

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At this time last year, the secondary was being regarded as the strength of Iowa's defense. But instead of living up to that billing, the Hawkeyes' defensive backs mightily struggled in 2012. Even with a corner like Micah Hyde, who was named the Big Ten's top defensive back last season and was the only Hawkeye player taken in the 2013 NFL Draft, this was a group that surrendered numerous big plays to opposing offenses.

A rather interesting change was made this offseason, however. Darrell Wilson, who served as Iowa's defensive backs coach last year after Phil Parker was promoted to defensive coordinator, left to take a similar coaching role at future Big Ten member Rutgers. Instead of looking outside the program like he did to fill his other assistant vacancies this year, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz made the decision to have Parker return to his old role of coaching the secondary while also remaining in charge of the entire defense.

Almost right away, there was a level of excitement among Iowa's current group of DBs, most of whom were brought on board when Parker was still their position coach. Junior safety Nico Law described Parker as "a perfectionist" and said he feels like a coach on the field because of the type of

small details Parker has him and the rest of the group focus on during meetings and practice.

"He has meant everything," sophomore cornerback Jordan Lomax said. "He really forces you to use your brain a lot, to be more mentally smart on the field and he breaks it down in film study. 'What are we looking at? What's the formation? What's the offense going to come out in so we can already predetermine what play they're going to run?'"

"He's a real great coach when it comes to teaching us the game and he'll slow it down, just so that we know the game."

The most likely beneficiary of Parker's return to coaching the secondary is senior free safety Tanner Miller. After having a productive sophomore campaign in 2011, Miller's play took a very noticeable step back last year. This is something Miller himself has acknowledged this offseason and has used as motivation for 2013 being the most veteran defensive back the Hawkeyes have.

"I have a pretty good grasp on the system. It's just a matter of taking it to the next level," Miller said. "I'm just watching more film and making strides from last year. I have a pretty good idea what I'm doing and now it's just a matter of taking on a leadership role and taking these younger guys along with me so we have quite a bit of depth."

As for the rest of the group, the pieces appear to be in place at both corner spots. B.J. Lowery returns for his senior season and the feeling among a lot of his defensive teammates right now is he's the one player most likely to have a breakout 2013 season, primarily because of the example he displayed to them throughout the entire offseason.

"He's a great leader and he's always giving 100 percent effort," Law said. "He helps me. He's a good cover guy, so if I mess up, he's there."

Replacing Hyde at the other corner spot is Lomax, who probably would've seen the field much sooner if not for injuries. Interestingly enough, Lomax was actually competing with Lowery to start opposite Hyde prior to last season, only to suffer a season-ending shoulder injury before the season even began. Because Lomax played as a true freshman in 2011, he was able to redshirt last season and still has three years of eligibility.

"I'm an aggressive corner," Lomax said. "I'm very physical. I like to be able to break down a play, recognize the formation and already predetermine what play the offense will run. I like to run with wide receivers, knock the ball down and get interceptions."

Strong safety is where the most noteworthy competition is taking place. Law and fellow junior safety John Lowdermilk were listed as co-starters throughout the entirety of spring practices and have continued competing during fall camp. Law started a handful of games at strong safety late last season and will most likely emerge as the starter before Iowa's opener against Northern Illinois, but nothing has been set in stone.

Until the Hawkeye secondary shows it can limit the number of big plays given up – something it was awful at in 2012 – the questions will remain. But as a whole, this group of defensive backs has a confidence about them and that appears to stem from having Parker working more extensively with them again.

"We're just a year older as a whole secondary," Miller said. "[Lack of] communication and everything like that, I think, is what primarily led to those big plays and I think being around each other for just another year is going to help get those things straightened out.

"That's just a thing that Coach Parker stresses a lot – communication and everybody being on the same page so we don't

have those breakdowns in coverage and things like that.”