

COMMENTARY: Davis' vital role (premium)

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MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Last season, there was a lot of warranted criticism directed the way of Iowa offensive coordinator Greg Davis. After all, his first season at the helm for the Hawkeyes resulted in one of the most disastrous seasons Iowa has ever had offensively. Nothing seemed to work at times when it was needed.

On Saturday, Davis called his best game since joining the Hawkeyes. At least I feel he did, anyway. The evidence of Iowa making strides throughout the offseason and through five games of this 2013 season was on full display inside TCF Bank Stadium Saturday afternoon, particularly in the first half.

I make mention of the first half specifically because this is where the Hawkeyes took the most command en route to a 23-7 victory over Minnesota that looked more dominant than the final score may indicate.

Three plays – all of which came during the second quarter – showed Davis' play-calling at its absolute best. The first play came on a 3rd-and-3 where Iowa ran play-action following three Mark Weisman rushes. Jake Rudock, who went on to score a touchdown on the ground from four yards out on this specific drive, connected with fullback Adam Cox, who went 35 yards deep into Minnesota territory.

The second play is one that actually didn't work for the Hawkeyes, but nevertheless was a necessary and aggressive play-call. Following a spectacular interception by linebacker Christian Kirksey, Iowa attempted to go for the jugular on the

ensuing play, only for Rudock to throw an incomplete pass the direction of tight end George Kittle. Say what you will about the actual play itself, but I personally commend any coach who gets aggressive like that right after a key turnover. Iowa was at the Minnesota 23-yard line and a touchdown there would've made it 17-0.

Finally, the third call was the 74-yard touchdown pass via the tunnel screen, where Rudock completed a short pass to junior wideout Damond Powell, who found an opening and showcased his speed all the way to the end zone. This did make the score 17-0 and was for all intents and purposes the play that broke Minnesota's back Saturday. This was a play Iowa hadn't revealed prior to this game and the Hawkeyes executed it to perfection.

Now do the players deserve as much credit for making these plays happen on the field. Of course, and I'm not trying to dismiss anything they did. But I bring Davis to focus here because this game showed me that what he wants to accomplish can work. For all the criticism he has gotten throughout his brief tenure in Iowa City, the man deserves a ton of credit for what transpired in this game.

The personnel to play his type of offense is starting to reveal itself. Rudock continues to show poise with each week. The Hawkeyes have found a way to utilize all their running backs and tight ends, and the receivers are slowly but surely starting to become more confident with each repetition.

It's easy to get on coaching when teams lose. But make no mistake here. Coaching had just as much to do with Iowa beating Minnesota on Saturday as anything else, and if Davis continues to call games like he has this month, then the Hawkeyes are going to reach heights no one foresaw them reaching during the offseason.