

2014 Spring Football position breakdowns: Quarterbacks (premium)

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At this time last year, the quarterback position was an unknown for the Iowa Hawkeyes. In retrospect, it seemed obvious early on that Jake Rudock was going to end up being the starter, but the unknown had more to do with him not having had any sort of prior experience as he began to distinguish himself.

Rudock won the job and started all 13 of Iowa's games last season, yet the intrigue at this position wasn't so much Rudock starting as it was what happened behind him. As a redshirt freshman last year, C.J. Beathard began to separate himself from a junior college transfer in Cody Sokol and not only became the Hawkeyes' back-up signal-caller, but even finished three games in relief of an injured Rudock (including the 2014 Outback Bowl against LSU).

Sokol is now out of the picture, as he made the decision to transfer to Louisiana Tech. With immediate eligibility, he has a chance to start for the Bulldogs and that was something that was never happening at Iowa. The Hawkeyes had a third-string quarterback in redshirt freshman Nic Shimonek, who traveled to every road game last season like Rudock did when he redshirted in 2011.

Some might say the burning question regarding this position is how much competition actually exists. But if past history is any indication, the odds of Beathard having any chance to beat out Rudock are slim. Rudock has that season of starting

experience to his name and has two years of eligibility remaining. Barring some type of significant injury between now and the season opener against Northern Iowa on Aug. 30, expect Rudock to remain the starter because it's not as though he has done anything to warrant being benched.

Regardless of how small the gap possibly gets between the two though, Beathard's overall development is the most important thing to watch this spring when it comes to this group of quarterbacks. The potential is there and is something Beathard has displayed in games, but he looked raw in doing so.

Better decision-making is why Rudock has the edge now and probably will still have the edge this upcoming season. But coaches always use the cliché of how back-ups should prepare as though they're going to start and that mindset definitely applies here.

Even if Rudock starts every game again in 2014 like he did last season, his durability is going to be a question mark. With that in mind, Beathard's knowledge of Greg Davis' system and being able to play within his strengths is crucial. This is his chance to polish his game to an extent where maybe in the future, a more serious case could be made for him starting. If he doesn't develop properly, not only would Rudock be creating further separation. The gap between Beathard and Shimonek would also narrow.

The intrigue with this group might not be as strong now as it was in 2013, but there's still some that exists. What happens behind Rudock now will factor into whether that intrigue increases or dwindles once the Hawkeyes break for fall camp in August.