

# 2014 Iowa position breakdowns: Quarterbacks

*\*This week, HawkeyeDrive.com presents an eight-part series of position breakdowns as the Iowa Hawkeyes continue preparing for the 2014 season. Our first part examines the team's quarterbacks.\**

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At this time last year, the Iowa Hawkeyes had a 3-way battle taking place at quarterback that realistically was nothing more than formality. There was never a doubt about Jake Rudock taking over as Iowa's signal-caller and he started all 13 of the Hawkeyes' games last season under center.

This fall, there's no debate about who's starting. Head coach Kirk Ferentz unequivocally said the junior Rudock is going to open 2014 as the starter. But with the development of back-up C.J. Beathard, the intrigue hasn't really gone away.

Rudock was the starter, but Beathard appeared in five games last season as a redshirt freshman. Three of those five appearances came in relief of Rudock leaving games with leg injuries, including the 2014 Outback Bowl against LSU.

With this in mind, Ferentz and offensive coordinator Greg Davis had dialogue during the spring about the possibility of using both QBs fall a la 2001 when the Hawkeyes used both Kyle McCann and Brad Banks. That season, McCann started every game and played an overwhelming majority of the offensive snaps. But Banks was always given a series or two each game to showcase his skills and then proceeded to make the most of his opportunity the following season.

"If we can get a competitive edge, we're going to try to utilize that. If not, we won't," Ferentz said. "But that's something we kicked around during the out of season.

"But if we can find a way to maybe get a competitive edge, make it tougher for our opponents to prepare, that would be a good thing."

As far as what makes this so intriguing, consider some outside perspective. Last season, Rudock completed 59 percent of his passes for 2,383 yards through the air and 18 touchdowns to just 13 interceptions. The only other quarterback within Iowa's division with comparable or better numbers is Wisconsin's Joel Stave and his status as the Badgers' starting quarterback in 2014 is currently uncertain.

But here's where Rudock had the edge last fall and still has the edge now – his grasp of the Iowa playbook. Cerebrally speaking, Rudock believes he has a better understanding of not just what he sees during a given play, but also what his teammates are seeing. This has also allowed him to improve the rapport he has developed with his teammates at skill positions, a lot of whom also share similar game experience from a year ago.

Meanwhile, Beathard has attempted to make similar improvements to his game. He spent the offseason examining the decision-making he made in the games he appeared in last season and how that could be better. Also like Rudock, he spent a good portion of the summer throwing the ball around with teammates and doing 7-on-7 drills.

Beathard said he's flattered by the idea of the coaching staff contemplating ways to get both he and Rudock involved, but also made clear his intent is to do whatever's necessary to one day become the starting QB. Rudock also has the same mindset in that he doesn't want to relinquish a job he and his coaches believe has been earned.

On Aug. 30, Rudock will start against Northern Iowa and barring further injuries will continue to start at quarterback for the Hawkeyes this season. But this dynamic of possibly finding ways for both Rudock and Beathard to see the field in 2014 is nothing short of interesting.

“I just feel like we’re very fortunate to have two guys who can go in and produce,” said Davis, who is also the Hawkeyes’ quarterbacks coach. “You know, we’ll look as camp goes on as far as what’s the possibility of playing both of them in the course of a ball game. They’ll determine that. But it’s something we’re going to look at.”