

2013 Big Ten football TV schedule: Week Seven

Every week, we will post the TV schedule for all games featuring Big Ten teams. Here is where and when you can watch them this week:

Oct. 12:

Indiana at Michigan State, 11 a.m., ESPN2

Nebraska at Purdue, 11 a.m., BTN

No. 19 Northwestern at Wisconsin, 2:30 p.m., ABC/ESPN2

No. 18 Michigan at Penn State, 4 p.m., ESPN

***All times listed are Central Standard Time.**

10/5/2013: Michigan State 26, Iowa 14 (Links)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Check out all of these links to content posted on Saturday after Iowa's 26-14 loss to Michigan State at Kinnick Stadium. Please note, anything with "premium" in parentheses are links that can only be accessed by those logged in as either a paid subscriber or three-day free trial member to *HawkeyeDrive.com*:

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Hawkeyes suffocated by Spartans

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – For a time span of 6 minutes and 18 seconds Saturday, the Iowa Hawkeyes showed signs of life. They

overcame a 10-0 deficit to Michigan State and scored a pair of touchdowns to take a 14-10 lead into halftime.

That's about all the life that was shown, however. Those other 53 minutes and 42 seconds were controlled by the Spartans, who left Kinnick Stadium with a 26-14 win over Iowa that dropped the Hawkeyes to 1-1 in Big Ten play and 4-2 overall.

Michigan State came in with one of the nation's best defenses statistically and backed it up. Iowa was unable to get anything going on the ground, rushing for a meager 23 yards on 16 carries.

"We felt like we could run the ball," sophomore center Austin Blythe said. "It just didn't work out like it should have and like we wanted it to."

The game's first 15 minutes lived up to the billing it had all week. Neither team scored in the first quarter and the defenses were making plays. But Michigan State got it going in the second quarter when it was able to exploit Iowa's nickel package.

Three of the Spartans' four third-down conversions in the first half came when the Hawkeyes had the extra defensive back on the field. In fact, Michigan State's touchdown – a 46-yard pass from Connor Cook to Macgarrett Kings came on a third-down play where Iowa went nickel.

"There were some blitzes, some all-out blitzes, blitzes where we were in Cover 0," said senior free safety Tanner Miller, who was sent to blitz on the play Michigan State scored on. "Those are things where you put a lot on the line. You're either going to win or lose on them."

"There were some that we got home on and covered up nicely and then there were the ones where they got free and had the big plays."

At this point, with 6:18 left in the first half, the Hawkeye offense awoke and the Spartan defense began to unravel. After completing just one of his first four pass attempts, sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock ended the half completing 11 straight throws, including a pair of touchdown passes to junior running back Damon Bullock (47 yards) and senior tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz (10 yards).

Iowa came out for the second half and made one adjustment defensively – sticking to its base 4-3 look the rest of the game. Unfortunately for the Hawkeyes, the Spartan offense adjusted around that. Michigan State opened the half with a 7-play, 75-yard drive capped by Cook throwing a 37-yard touchdown pass to Bennie Fowler to give the Spartans a 17-14 lead. From there, the Hawkeyes tightened up and couldn't muster anything on offense.

A 35-yard field goal by Michael Geiger (the second of four he made on the day) gave Michigan State a 20-14 lead, which is what the score remained entering the fourth quarter and the Spartans facing 4th-and-7 from their own 37-yard line. Instead of going punt-safe, Iowa sent its normal punt return unit out on the field.

"When they were in the huddle, I ran over and told them, 'Watch the fake,'" senior linebacker Anthony Hitchens said.

Michigan State punter Mike Sadler took the snap, then proceeded to run up the middle and eventually down the sideline for a 25-yard gain. As a result of Iowa opting not to line up punt-safe, Sadler had more rushing yards on one play than the Hawkeye offense did for the entire game and the Spartans were able to make it a 2-possession game with 13:28 remaining when a 49-yard field goal by Geiger made it 23-14.

"Historically, they've taken chances and special teams have taken chances, run fakes, gadgets, whatever, so that didn't surprise us at all," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said. "That

was not a surprise, that part of it. But it's a good job on their part.

"We had a return set up and they hit us where we were weak."

Compounding matters was the number of injuries Iowa dealt with Saturday. Junior wideout Kevonte Martin-Manley was limited due to a right leg injury and actually left the game during the first half. Mark Weisman, Brandon Scherff and Carl Davis all left with injuries, but returned. Senior defensive end Dominic Alvis and senior linebacker Christian Kirksey didn't. Ferentz said afterwards all in-game injuries were "minor."

Iowa has the first of two bye weeks coming up before returning to the gridiron Oct. 19 for a contest at No. 4 Ohio State. This is the first time the Hawkeyes have had multiple bye weeks during Ferentz's 15 seasons as head coach. The second bye comes during the middle of November, which Ferentz said will be spent more on the recruiting ground than this coming week would be.

"The next series of games that we play involve new preparations for us, for the most part I think all but one," Ferentz said. "So it really gives us a chance maybe to focus on our team and then secondly focus on the teams that we have coming up."

COMMENTARY: Confronting the crossroads (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Halfway through the 2013 football season, the Iowa Hawkeyes find themselves at a crossroads similar to last year.

Iowa now sits at 4-2 through six games once again after losing 26-14 to Michigan State on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium. This was the same point in 2012 where everything began to unravel for the Hawkeyes en route to losing six straight and ending up 4-8.

This time last year was when Iowa had its Titanic hitting the iceberg moment and the Hawkeyes saw their season sink. If they're going to prevent history from repeating itself now, they have to confront some issues that have potential to plague them further if they aren't fixed between now and Oct. 19 when they play at No. 4 Ohio State.

Let's start with the offense. Iowa did play the best defense it will face by far this entire season in the Spartans. But that doesn't mean there aren't competent defenses left on the schedule. The Hawkeyes' glimpses of success Saturday came when they pushed the tempo in the second quarter. This is something they spent the entire offseason working on and to be quite honest, this has to be their M.O. the rest of the way.

Because here's what happened when they didn't press the issue – Michigan State keyed on the run, made it completely non-existent and sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock wound up throwing 46 times out of 62 plays the Iowa offense ran, the fewest amount of plays in a game from the Hawkeyes this season. This is an offense designed to run around 75-80 plays per game, so 62 isn't going to cut it given the competition Iowa has the rest of the way.

Defensively, Iowa needs to limit the amount of nickel and dime packages it uses, if not scrap it. It's pretty obvious right now the secondary is the weak link of the Hawkeye defense and the times Iowa went nickel in the first half against Michigan

State on Saturday, the Spartans had their most success.

Even beyond the secondary issues however, this is a defense led by a trio of senior linebackers that one could argue are the three best players on the entire defense. When Iowa goes nickel, the trade-off for an extra defensive back on the field is taking out Anthony Hitchens, a guy who finished with 12 tackles Saturday and has played lights out all season.

Barring injuries, Hitchens, James Morris and Christian Kirksey all need to be on the field as much as possible. Sure, this might stunt growth in some of Iowa's younger defensive players, but they're still going to be around. These guys aren't. Get the most out of them now.

And then there's special teams. Once again, Iowa gave up a fake punt on the first play of the fourth quarter. When it happened earlier this season against Northern Illinois, the Hawkeyes were in punt-safe. That wasn't the case here against Michigan State. The one surrendered Saturday looked more like the one surrendered in 2010 when Iowa lost to Wisconsin and it came with the majority of the defensive starters on the sideline.

Right now, there's nothing encouraging about Iowa's special teams unit. One week, it's kickoff coverage that's leaky. Another week, it's an onside kick an opposing team is pulling off. Then it's like Saturday where a punter on one play could outrush the entire Iowa offense.

Yes, a shake-up was done to the coaching staff and a heavy emphasis was placed all offseason on improving Iowa's special teams. But for all the improvements that do take place, it's clear this isn't an overnight fix. Until Iowa can prove it can be consistent in all aspects of special teams, it's going to continue to get exploited like it has the majority of this season.

All hope isn't lost for Iowa here. Unlike 2012, the Hawkeyes

at least appear capable of swimming to shore right now. The waters are treacherous with opponents like Ohio State, Northwestern, Wisconsin, Michigan and Nebraska all remaining on the schedule. But one win out of that group and beating a lowly Purdue squad puts Iowa in a bowl game, which is an accomplishment after last year.

The Hawkeyes are confronted by a crossroads and the question now becomes this – Will they actually tackle their current problems head on before it's too late? Again, they're capable of doing so and if they do, then there's a positive on the horizon Iowa can build off of.

If the Hawkeyes don't though meet things head on though, well, history will wind up repeating itself.

Iowa-MSU video: B.J. Lowery

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Iowa senior cornerback B.J. Lowery finished with eight tackles and three pass break ups in the Hawkeyes' 26-14 loss to Michigan State on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium.

Iowa-MSU video: Anthony Hitchens

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Iowa senior linebacker Anthony Hitchens recorded a team-high 12 tackles in the Hawkeyes' 26-14 loss to Michigan State on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium.

Iowa-MSU video: James Morris

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Iowa senior linebacker James Morris finished with a team-high 12 tackles and recorded an interception in the Hawkeyes' 26-14 loss to Michigan State on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium.

Iowa-MSU video: Jake Rudock

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Iowa sophomore quarterback Jake Rudock completed 26-of-46 passes for 241 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions, and also rushed for a team-high 11 yards on three carries in the Hawkeyes' 26-14 loss to Michigan State on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium.

Iowa-MSU video: Tanner Miller

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Iowa senior free safety Tanner Miller recorded five tackles in the Hawkeyes' 26-14 loss to Michigan State on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium.

Iowa-MSU video: Carl Davis

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Iowa junior defensive tackle Carl Davis finished with one tackle in the Hawkeyes' 26-14 loss to Michigan State on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium.