

# 2012 Big Ten football previews: Indiana (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

After examining [Penn State](#) and [Ohio State](#), the next Big Ten team we will preview is the Indiana Hoosiers. Iowa will visit Memorial Stadium in Bloomington, Ind., on Nov. 3.

The good news for Indiana is it's one of only four teams that can represent the Leaders Division in the 2012 Big Ten Championship Game. The bad news, however, is the Hoosiers' odds of playing up the road at Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium on Dec. 1 are slim to none.

Coming off an abysmal 2011 where Indiana went 1-11, the Hoosiers might be better this fall in what will be head coach Kevin Wilson's second year at the helm, but it's hard to envision them not finishing with the conference's worst record once again.

Indiana does return a combined 15 starters from last year on both sides of the ball. One player returning who is returning is sophomore quarterback Tré Roberson, which should be encouraging for the Hoosier faithful. Roberson emerged as the team's starter midway through last season and appeared in nine games.

Through the air, he completed 57 percent of his passes for 937 yards, but only had three touchdowns to six interceptions. As a team, Indiana only had 10 passing touchdowns all season. On the ground, Roberson rushed for 426 yards on 109 carries and had two touchdowns. Being the full-time starter, Roberson's numbers should improve in 2012 and his mobility is going to be needed if the Hoosiers are going to even have a chance at

fielding a good football team.

Junior running back Stephen Houston was Indiana's leading rusher last season, compiling 802 yards and scoring eight touchdowns. Having him back should help take some of the pressure of Roberson. The Hoosiers also return sophomore D'Angelo Roberts, who rushed for 263 yards and two scores in 2011.

The receiving corps is led by junior Kofi Hughes, who will miss Indiana's opener against Indiana State due to a violation of team rules. Last season, Hughes hauled in 35 catches for 536 receiving yards – more than double the next closest to him in that category – and tied for a team-high three touchdowns. When Hughes returns, he'll need to elevate his game, as will fellow juniors Jamonne Chester and Duwyce Wilson, who combined for 457 yards receiving in 2011.

Up front, the Hoosiers are fairly young with three sophomores listed atop the team's preseason depth chart. The lone returning starter is a good one though in senior center Will Matte. Prior to an injury that took place during Indiana's game against Wisconsin last season, Matte had started the first 32 games of his Hoosier career. He ended up starting nine of the 10 games he appeared in during 2011. His leadership will be essential in 2012.

Defensively, the front four looks to be the strength, led by a pair of senior defensive tackles who started every game last season – Adam Replogle and Larry Black, Jr. In 2011, Replogle recorded 49 tackles and led the Hoosiers with seven sacks. Black, Jr., had nearly identical numbers with 47 tackles and 5.5 sacks. At the two end positions, sophomores Bobby Richardson and Ryan Phillis both made six starts for Indiana last season, including each of the last four games. Richardson also recorded four sacks in the nine games he appeared in.

The biggest question mark surrounding this defense is at

linebacker, where only one starter – sophomore Chase Hoobler – returns on the outside. Sophomore David Cooper was listed first-string at the middle spot on the preseason depth chart, while the weak side spot looks to be occupied by junior Jacarri Alexander.

In the secondary, sophomore safety Mark Murphy looks to build off an impressive freshman campaign where he finished second on the team with 76 tackles. Indiana's third-leading tackler from last year also returns – junior cornerback Greg Heban. He also had a team-high two interceptions in addition to his 62 tackles. Fellow junior cornerback Lawrence Barnett is coming off a season where he recorded 46 tackles and broke up six passes, but like Hughes, Barnett was also suspended for the Indiana State game for a violation of team rules.

Indiana will break in a new punter in 2012 with junior Mitchell Voss. It does return its placekicker however in senior Mitch Ewald, who connected on 13-of-16 field goal attempts last season. The return game features sophomore Shane Wynn, who had the Hoosiers' lone special teams touchdown in 2011, a 99-yard return on the opening kickoff of their game against Illinois.

Looking at the schedule, the non-conference slate is lackluster as it doesn't feature a single team that had a winning record in 2011. It does, however, include two road games – at Massachusetts on Sept. 8 and during the middle of Big Ten play, a game at Navy on Oct. 20.

The Big Ten portion will be brutal again, as it was last season. Michigan State, Ohio State, Iowa and Wisconsin all have to play at Memorial Stadium this fall, but the Hoosiers will be likely underdogs in all four games. Indiana's best shot at a home win during Big Ten play might be that game against the Hawkeyes on Nov. 3, as the Hoosiers have made Iowa sweat in each of its head-to-head victories over the past three seasons. The season concludes with four of six games

away from Bloomington, including the last two against Penn State and Purdue.

Again, Indiana will probably be a better team in 2012. But it's not going to be fully evident in the win-loss column.

**AUDIO:** [Indiana DT Adam Replogle](#)

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## 2012 Iowa position breakdowns: Offensive Line

*\*This week, HawkeyeDrive.com presents an eight-part series of position breakdowns as the Iowa Hawkeyes continue preparing for the 2012 season. After previously focusing on [quarterbacks](#), [running backs](#) and the group of [wide receivers and tight ends](#), our fourth part examines the team's offensive line.\**

By Brendan Stiles

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For a unit that saw three of its starters from last season find themselves in NFL training camps, there's reason for Iowa fans to be optimistic about the Hawkeyes' current offensive line. With former Iowa center Brian Ferentz now taking over the reins as the Hawkeyes' offensive line coach, the potential is there.

Ferentz originally said during the early portion of fall camp that 8-9 players were in contention for starting spots and that he's ideally like to have at least seven players able to compete for spots over the course of the fall.

But barring anything unusual between now and Iowa's opener on Sept. 1 against Northern Illinois, the Hawkeyes' quintet of starting offensive linemen will be one that features five native Iowans – sophomore left tackle Brandon Scherff (Denison), senior left guard Matt Tobin (Worthington), senior center James Ferentz (Iowa City), redshirt freshman right guard Austin Blythe (Williamsburg) and junior right tackle Brett Van Sloten (Decorah). All five were listed on the 2-deep with the first-team offense and all five have worked with the first-team offense throughout camp.

“To have a chance to have five guys from Iowa obviously is special,” Brian said. “But what we're really trying to do is put the five guys out there that can help our football team win football games.”

The most experienced of the bunch is Brian's younger brother, James, who anchors the O-line after having started every game at center for each of the past two seasons.

While being in the unique position of having his older brother as the position coach, the 6-2, 284-pound center said one area of his game he believes has gotten better because of Brian has been consistency.

“We'll throw in a game tape and I've never really noticed there are a lot of inconsistencies with footwork that go from play to play,” James said. “You think it's a good play, but he has really been able to just point out an improvement you could make on something you would've thought is good.”

“To have him around with that kind of honesty and being able to point out those things has really been beneficial to me.”

Both Tobin and Scherff split time last season starting at left guard. But with Riley Reiff leaving early to become a first-round pick of the Detroit Lions, both will likely be starters in 2012 with Scherff moving over to fill that vacancy at left tackle and the 6-6, 290-pound Tobin remaining at left guard.

"I know the offense a little better, a lot of the little things on the offensive line like playing guard, 'checking with me,' a bunch of stuff that I knew, but couldn't do on a consistent basis," Tobin said. "I kind of just have the confidence to play a little bit better."

For Scherff, the transition to left tackle has been seamless. While he was never listed behind Reiff at left tackle on the 2-deep, he had limited playing experience at the position in both games and practices last season. Now as the guy protecting senior quarterback James Vandenberg's blind side, the 6-5, 310-pound tackle looks to follow in a legacy that features the likes of Reiff, Bryan Bulaga and Robert Gallery – all of whom were first round picks.

"He's a big, strong, mature guy with a great attitude, good work ethic," head coach Kirk Ferentz said. "I think we all feel he's probably a little bit more comfortable on the outside."

Meanwhile, the inexperience lies on the right side of the line. Van Sloten will finally get a crack at right tackle after spending two seasons behind Markus Zusevics on Iowa's 2-deep. However, Van Sloten did find himself playing the second half of the Hawkeyes' Insight Bowl loss to Oklahoma last season in Zusevics' place.

"He shows guys how to do things simply with his actions," Brian said about the 6-7, 292-pound Van Sloten. "He's a guy who maximizes the most of what he has. He's very fundamentally sound. He works at it and I think it's important to him. I really do."

As for right guard, Blythe has emerged as the one getting the majority of reps with the first offense. The battle has continued on between the 6-3, 275-pound Blythe and 6-4, 270-pound redshirt freshman Jordan Walsh.

"I think we have a pretty good, healthy competition there,"

Kirk said. "That's a spot that's going to be fun to watch."

One other player who could be in the running for early playing time this season is sophomore offensive tackle Andrew Donnal. At 6-7, 302 pounds, Donnal was the guy listed on the 2-deep behind Reiff at left tackle last season and could possibly be a contributor up front if his name gets called.

Should Iowa have offensive success in 2012, what's in place along the offensive line will likely be a big reason why.

"If you can help us, and we feel like you can help us win games, you're going to see time on Saturdays," Brian said. "Because there's no other way to get experience than to play when it counts."

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## **Hawkeyes in the NFL: 2012 Preseason Week Two**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

The second week of the 2012 NFL preseason begins Thursday. As of Wednesday, there currently remains 41 former Iowa football players listed on NFL rosters, with three listed on injured reserve. While not on injured reserve, former Iowa linebacker Pat Angerer suffered an injury last weekend that will sideline him for the remainder of the Indianapolis Colts' preseason slate.

Below is a list of this week's preseason games in the NFL, including which former Iowa players are with which teams. For those in Eastern Iowa, two NFL preseason games will be shown

Friday and Saturday nights respectively. On Friday, KGAN-TV (CBS affiliate) will carry the Minnesota Vikings' preseason game against the Buffalo Bills. KFXA-TV (FOX affiliate) will carry the Chicago Bears' preseason game against the Washington Redskins on Saturday.

In addition, there are six nationally televised preseason games this week including Friday's contest on FOX between the Detroit Lions and Baltimore Ravens, which features five former Hawkeye players.

**Thursday, Aug. 16:**

Cincinnati at Atlanta, 7 p.m. (FOX) – **Bengals:** Shaun Prater (IR); **Falcons:** Jonathan Babineaux

Cleveland at Green Bay, 7 p.m. – **Packers:** Bryan Bulaga, Mike Daniels

**Friday, Aug. 17:**

Tennessee at Tampa Bay, 6:30 p.m. – **Titans:** Karl Klug; **Buccaneers:** Dallas Clark, Adrian Clayborn, Eric Guthrie

Detroit at Baltimore, 7 p.m. (FOX) – **Lions:** Ryan Donahue, Riley Reiff, Amari Spivey; **Ravens:** Sean Considine, Marshal Yanda

Miami at Carolina, 7 p.m. – **Dolphins:** Eric Steinbach; **Panthers:** Charles Godfrey

Buffalo at Minnesota, 7 p.m. (KGAN-TV) – **Bills:** Scott Chandler; **Vikings:** Christian Ballard, Chad Greenway, Tyler Nielsen, Allen Reisner

Jacksonville at New Orleans, 7 p.m.

Oakland at Arizona, 9 p.m. – **Raiders:** Brandon Myers

**Saturday, Aug. 18:**



NY Giants at NY Jets, 6 p.m. (NFL Network) – *Giants: Tyler Sash; Jets: Shonn Greene, Matt Kroul*

Washington at Chicago, 7 p.m. (KFXA-TV) – *Redskins: Jordan Bernstine, Adam Gettis*

San Francisco at Houston, 7 p.m. – *Texans: Mitch King*

Kansas City at St. Louis, 7 p.m. – *Chiefs: Rob Bruggeman, Tony Moeaki, Ricky Stanzi; Rams: Bradley Fletcher, Bryan Mattison*

Seattle at Denver, 8 p.m.

Dallas at San Diego, 8 p.m. (NFL Network; JIP) – *Chargers: Nate Kaeding*

**Sunday, Aug. 19:**

Indianapolis at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m. (NBC) – *Colts: Seth Olsen, Pat Angerer (injured), A.J. Edds (IR)*

**Monday, Aug. 20:**

Philadelphia at New England, 7 p.m. (ESPN) – *Eagles: Marvin McNutt, Julian Vandervelde; Patriots: Jeff Tarpinian, Markus Zusevics, Brad Herman (IR)*

*\*All times listed are Central Standard Time*

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**2012 Big Ten football  
previews: Ohio State**

# (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

After looking at [Penn State](#) on Monday, we turn our attention to previewing the upcoming season for the Ohio State Buckeyes. Iowa does not play Ohio State in 2012.

Before going too in-depth discussing Ohio State, I'll point out the obvious that the Buckeyes do have a postseason ban in effect this season that bars them from playing for the Big Ten championship next December and from playing in any bowl game. This is the only year this postseason ban is in place.

Now, with that being said, let me say something that apparently no one is willing to say because of Ohio State's postseason ban – the Buckeyes might wind up being the best team in the Big Ten this season, even without a championship trophy to its name.

That might seem crazy given that this will be Urban Meyer's first season at the coaching helm. But I got to say, I think the year away from coaching gave Meyer a different perspective that will benefit him going forward and like Brady Hoke at Michigan last season, Meyer is the kind of coach that could have an immediate impact in the Big Ten.

When assembling his coaching staff, Meyer made the decision to keep Luke Fickell on board as a defensive assistant, despite Ohio State going 6-7 last season under Fickell's watch as the interim head coach. I think it was wise for Meyer to do this, because while Fickell might not be cut out to be a head coach, he has proven over the course of time to be a solid assistant for the Buckeyes.

Ohio State brings back 15 of 22 starters from last year's

team. The most significant returnee on the offensive side of the ball is sophomore quarterback Braxton Miller, who eventually emerged as the Buckeye starter midway through last season. Miller had his struggles early on, but eventually finished with 1,159 passing yards, 715 rushing yards and he accounted for 20 touchdowns. Given his play-making ability, as well as being able to spend an entire offseason learning an offense he should thrive in, I expect Miller to post better numbers in his sophomore campaign.

In the ground game, Ohio State will be without the services of senior running back Jordan Hall for at least a few weeks due to a foot injury suffered in the summer. Once he returns to the backfield however, I see him being a key part of the Buckeyes' offense.

The same can be said for senior tight end Jake Stoneburner, whose 14 receptions last season included seven touchdown catches. Those seven scores were good for fourth among all tight ends in 2011. If he posts similar or better numbers in 2012, there's a good chance Stoneburner winds up being first-team all-Big Ten.

Two areas where Ohio State will need players to emerge this season are at receiver and along the offensive line. The wideouts who are returning are either inexperienced or have yet to simply post typical receiver's numbers. As for the O-line, it loses center Mike Brewster and both tackles off last year's squad.

Defensively, the Buckeyes have as good a duo of defensive linemen as there is in the entire conference with senior defensive end John Simon and junior defensive tackle Johnathan Hankins. Simon recorded 53 tackles and led Ohio State with seven sacks last season, while Hankins is coming off a sophomore campaign where he compiled 69 tackles and three sacks.

The secondary also features loads of experience, as the four projected starters combined for 49 starts, 25 pass break-ups and seven interceptions in 2011. Junior safeties C.J. Barnett and Christian Bryant are Ohio State's top returning leading tacklers from last season.

While the front four and back four seem set, the linebacking corps has the biggest question mark surrounding it, losing Andrew Sweat and Storm Klein from last year's squad – Klein was dismissed from the team by Meyer during the offseason. Both senior Etienne Sabino and sophomore Ryan Shazier made starts for the Buckeyes last season, but neither was a regular fixture like Sweat or Klein. Sabino recorded 62 tackles, while Shazier had 57 tackles.

As far as special teams is concerned, Hall would be Ohio State's main return man once he returns from injury. The good news for the Buckeyes is both junior kicker Dan Basil and senior punter Bret Buchanan return in 2012. Basil led the conference in field goal percentage connecting on 16-of-19 field goal attempts in 2011, while Buchanan averaged 37.4 yards per punt and only had three touchbacks on 70 punts.

Looking at Ohio State's schedule, circle the date of Sept. 29. The Buckeyes travel to East Lansing, Mich., to play Michigan State that day and should enter that contest 4-0 with all four of their non-conference games in the Horseshoe against teams they should beat. If Ohio State were to leave Spartan Stadium with a victory, the possibility of the Buckeyes being 10-0 entering its Nov. 17 showdown at Wisconsin is very real.

Sandwiched between those road games at Michigan State and Wisconsin are five games – vs. Nebraska, at Indiana, vs. Purdue, at Penn State, vs. Illinois – plus a bye week prior to that trip to Madison. Given everything that has transpired with Penn State over recent weeks, it's safe to say the three toughest games Ohio State has during that stretch are all in Columbus. Yes, the Buckeyes lost to both Nebraska and Purdue

last season, but both games were on the road and both were games Ohio State let slip away. I don't expect the same thing to happen this fall with those teams visiting the Horseshoe.

Let's also keep in mind that with the postseason ban, Ohio State's regular season finale against Michigan will essentially be the Buckeyes' bowl game in 2012, especially with the Wolverines finally ending a seven-game losing streak to the Buckeyes last year. It might also be an opportunity for Ohio State to spoil Michigan's hopes of winning the Big Ten in 2012, so the magnitude of this game won't be any different compared to before.

There are questions, just like there is with every team at this time of year, but there's enough in place for Meyer to leave a lasting impression on the entire Big Ten in Year One of his regime in Columbus. If Ohio State winds up having a big season, expect it to be among the early favorites to win the conference in 2013 once the postseason ban expires.

**AUDIO:** [Ohio State DE John Simon](#)

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## **2012 Iowa position breakdowns: Wide Receivers/Tight Ends**

*\*This week, HawkeyeDrive.com presents an eight-part series of position breakdowns as the Iowa Hawkeyes continue preparing for the 2012 season. After previously focusing on [quarterbacks](#) and [running backs](#), our third part examines the team's group of wide receivers and tight ends.\**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

All of the accomplishments garnered last season by former Iowa wide receiver Marvin McNutt cannot be overstated. Look at the record books, and just about everything listed in the receiving category features his name at the top.

Now with McNutt taking his skills to the Philadelphia Eagles, the challenge for Iowa in 2012 will be how to make up for some of that production he provided last season.

With just over two weeks remaining before the Hawkeyes' season opener, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz believes his receiving corps has made enormous strides since last spring and that his collection of tight ends might be as impressive a group as Iowa has had thus far in fall camp.

"I think tight ends are one of our better positions right now," Ferentz said following Iowa's Kid's Day practice on Aug. 11. "I will say our receivers have done better. I wasn't really pleased with them in the spring. I think they've done better thus far."

Filling that void left by McNutt as the top wideout is senior Keenan Davis, who was second to McNutt in nearly every receiving category last season. Davis spent the offseason becoming a leaner receiver, currently sitting at 210 pounds after being 220 pounds before.

"I'm in more shape. I'm not as winded as I was," Davis said. "Compared to last year, the first couple of practices I couldn't breathe out there. It felt good to actually come in in shape and come in ready."

As a junior, Davis caught 50 passes for 713 receiving yards and four touchdowns. Not only have those in Iowa begun shining the spotlight on the Cedar Rapids native, but those around the

Big Ten as well. Among returning Big Ten wideouts, Davis averaged the most receptions per game and second-most receiving yards per game last season.

Elevating into the role of the No. 2 receiver now is sophomore Kevonte Martin-Manley, who had perhaps the best game of his career thus far last season catching two fourth-quarter touchdowns in a 31-27 win over Pittsburgh that featured the Hawkeyes trailing by as much as 21 points in the second half. This season, Martin-Manley's responsibilities increase, but Iowa plans to use him frequently as a slot receiver in addition to playing on the outside.

Prior to Iowa's appearance in the 2011 Insight Bowl, both McNutt and Davis raved about Martin-Manley's work ethic on and off the field. Wide receivers coach Erik Campbell echoed those same sentiments about the Michigan native.

"I think he's one of the hardest working players, not just at receiver, but hardest working players on the team," Campbell said. "I mean, he's a guy that comes to practice every day, he's going 100 miles an hour full speed and he doesn't back off from anything. From blocking to running routes to making a catch, he's a guy that's going to go after everything and try to be the best."

While there is uncertainty beyond Davis and Martin-Manley, the one player who has emerged as the likely No. 3 receiver for Iowa is junior Don Shumpert. While Shumpert hasn't made a catch in his Hawkeye career, he has gotten work in along with Davis and Martin-Manley with the first-team offense when practicing plays out of three-receiver sets. Beyond those three, other names to keep an eye on over the course of the season are redshirt freshman Jacob Hillyer, senior Steven Staggs and junior Jordan Cotton.

"We've all progressed and we've all gotten better as a group," Martin-Manley said. "Everyone needs to step up if we're going

to be better.”

Then there’s the tight end group Ferentz raved about, which will be led by junior tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz. Late in his sophomore season is when the light turned on for Fiedorowicz. Of his 16 catches last season, 14 of them came in the Hawkeyes’ final six games and all three touchdown receptions took place during Iowa’s last four contests.

In the new offense implemented by first-year offensive coordinator Greg Davis, the 6-7 tight end looks to be an integral part.

“C.J. has got a chance to be an outstanding player,” Greg Davis said. “He’s a year older. I was very pleased in the spring, not only with the way he ran and caught the ball, but with his ability to block and set the edge for us. I think we have high expectations for him and I know he has high expectations for himself.”

When Iowa goes to a two-TE set, most likely joining Fiedorowicz on the field will be senior tight end Zach Derby. Others vying for playing time include sophomore Ray Hamilton and redshirt freshmen Henry Krieger-Coble and Jake Duzey, who practiced well during the Hawkeyes’ Kid’s Day practice at Kinnick Stadium on Aug. 11.

“Since Coach Davis has come in, we’ve all just really hit the playbooks hard,” Hamilton said. “I think that’s what it came down to. We’re all really trying to get down the concepts, how many steps we have to take on this block, how many steps he wants on this route. It’s really just the new things that he likes and what he likes in his tight ends.

“He does such a great job with his tight ends that we need to be able to do whatever he asks of us.”

Maybe there isn’t that one guy who sets milestone after milestone in the passing game like McNutt did in 2011. But if



the Hawkeyes have any shot at competing for a conference title, success in the passing game – whether it’s through the wide receivers, tight ends or both – will be essential.

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## **Second open practice scheduled for Aug. 18**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

For the second consecutive weekend, the Iowa Hawkeyes will hold an open practice at Kinnick Stadium.

This open practice is scheduled to take place Aug. 18, seven days following the Kid’s Day open practice that is held annually every August. According to a release sent out Tuesday morning by the UI, gates are scheduled to open for the public at 11 a.m. Central, with the practice set to go from 12:15-2:15 p.m.

The decision to have a second open practice, according to one source, was made by head coach Kirk Ferentz on Monday. Following the Kid’s Day practice held last weekend, which didn’t feature a plethora of players due to minor injuries, Ferentz voiced some frustration.

“It makes it hard to make progress, certainly,” Ferentz said. “It makes it hard to evaluate the team.”

Ferentz hinted at the possibility of something like this happening, saying “I think if we had enough time, I’d do another Fan Day Saturday.” He went on to explain how important he thought it would be for the underclassmen, especially the

ones who missed the Aug. 11 practice, to have the experience of practicing in front of a crowd before the season began.

“It’s a big deal for the younger guys, just to have the music playing and all that stuff that distracts them typically,” Ferentz said. “We’ll have to create some of that because we’re a young team right now.”

The release also stated that there wouldn’t be an post-practice autograph session as there was following Kid’s Day and that concession stands at Kinnick Stadium wouldn’t be open for the Aug. 18 open practice.

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## **2012 Big Ten football previews: Penn State (premium)**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

The first team I’ll discuss in our series of Big Ten season previews is the Penn State Nittany Lions. Iowa will play Penn State on Oct. 20 at Kinnick Stadium.

*(Before going in-depth in discussing the Nittany Lions here, I want to make abundantly clear that I already established the opinion [on this site last month that I don’t think Penn State should play football in 2012](#) and did so three days before the NCAA imposed sanctions on the football program, which included a postseason ban and significant scholarship reductions. Because of this and because Penn State will be allowed to play football this fall, the intent of this post is simply to focus*

*on the actual football team, or in this case, what's left of it, just like all the other Big Ten football teams I intend to write about over the coming days.)*

As hard as it is to even think about football at Penn State given everything that has surfaced over the last nine months, I'm going to make my best attempt here to strictly talk about the current squad led by first-year head coach Bill O'Brien. And to be quite honest, I'm not sure where to start.

With the sanctions brought down on the football program July 23, as well as the ability for Penn State players to transfer to another FBS program without losing any eligibility this fall, the make-up of this team isn't remotely close to what it appeared to be even a month ago. Just in the last three weeks, the Nittany Lions have seen nine players leave for other programs. Among those players were back-up quarterback Rob Bolden (who started last season as Penn State's starter before being demoted and eventually transferring to LSU), kicker Anthony Fera (Texas), returning leading wideout Justin Brown (Oklahoma) and junior running back Silas Redd transferring to USC.

Redd's departure was the most significant of all, as he was widely regarded as the Nittany Lions' best player. As a sophomore last season, Redd rushed for 1,241 yards and seven touchdowns and was a huge reason why Penn State won eight of its first nine games – all of which have since been vacated as part of the punishment handed down by the NCAA.

With the hole at running back, one player in the backfield Penn State might have to rely on more now is junior Curtis Dukes, who was third on the team in rushing last season with 237 yards and one touchdown. Senior fullback Michael Zordich also provides experience to the backfield, as well as leadership the Nittany Lion offense is going to need.

Unlike the last few years, there's no controversy at

quarterback with senior Matt McGloin firmly at the helm. McGloin emerged midway through the season as the starting signal-caller and finished his junior season by compiling 1,751 yards through the air with eight touchdowns and five interceptions. The question becomes how much that can improve given the lack of playmakers Penn State now features in the receiving corps.

The offensive line features one returning starter from last season – center Matt Stankiewitch. He, along with junior guard John Urschel look to be the two anchors up front for the Nittany Lions in 2012.

While the offense faces loads of uncertainty, Penn State does have leaders in its defensive front seven. While losing the likes of defensive tackle Devon Still to the NFL following a season where he was named Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, senior defensive tackle Jordan Hill returns after a year where he recorded 59 tackles. The defensive line will also have the services of defensive end Pete Massaro, who looked to play a prominent role last season before tearing his ACL in the spring.

As for the linebacking corps, the names to watch are Gerald Hodges and Michael Mauti. Hodges led Penn State with 106 tackles last season and was first-team all-Big Ten. Mauti looked to be heading down a similar path before suffering a season-ending knee injury against Temple and in recent weeks, he has also become somewhat of a spokesperson for the players.

Before the sanctions were announced, Penn State looked like a team that could win around 7-8 games this season. Now, I'm not so sure. The Nittany Lions have the leadership on the defensive side of the ball to be formidable, but unless they're also providing a lion's share of the points this season, Penn State might struggle scoring 200 points this season (approximately 17 points per game). Given what's no longer at O'Brien's disposal offensively, I don't see this as

an exaggeration.

Penn State doesn't get any favors in scheduling, either. Sure, three of the four non-conference games are at Beaver Stadium, but the season-opener is against an Ohio squad that nearly won the MAC last year and might be the favorite to win it this year. The non-conference slate also features a trip to Virginia, who played in the Chick-Fil-A Bowl last year.

As far as Big Ten play is concerned, it won't matter in the grand scheme of things since Penn State won't be playing for a Big Ten title until 2016 at the earliest. But trips to Illinois, Iowa, Purdue and Nebraska all might be too much for the Nittany Lions to overcome now. Penn State gets both Ohio State and Wisconsin at home, which might have played to its benefit at this time a year ago but doesn't now.

I'm not going to question O'Brien's coaching or leadership skills. Given how productive the New England Patriots were with him as their offensive coordinator and the poise he has already demonstrated since taking this job, I think Penn State made a smart hire. But the fact of the matter is Penn State's talent deficiency has already become a growing concern that will only get bigger in the years ahead with it only being allowed 65 scholarship players as opposed to the regular 85.

**AUDIO:** [Penn State LB Michael Mauti](#)

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## **2012 Iowa position breakdowns: Running Backs**

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for the 2012 season. [After previously focusing on quarterbacks](#), our second part examines the team's group of running backs.\*

By Brendan Stiles

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The woes of the running back position at Iowa have become well-documented. Since the turn of the calendar, three of the Hawkeyes' top rushers – including Marcus Coker – no longer find themselves donning black and gold.

As Iowa continues to prepare for its season opener on Sept. 1 against Northern Illinois, the attention has now shifted to who's still around and what type of impact can be created out of the backfield.

"Anybody that's in the backfield position is going to get a look at carrying the football and just see if they can help us out in some way," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said during the team's Media Day on Aug. 6.

Back in the spring, it appeared sophomore Jordan Canzeri would earn the starting nod before tearing his ACL during a non-contact drill. As a result, Canzeri's injury seems to have paved the way for fellow sophomore running back Damon Bullock, who went back-and-forth last season between running back and wide receiver before the coaching staff finally settled on him being in the backfield prior to the Hawkeyes' 31-14 loss to Oklahoma in the 2011 Insight Bowl.

Bullock began taking the first-team reps after Canzeri got hurt and appeared to be in competition for the starting spot with De'Andre Johnson. But with Johnson being dismissed from the team on Aug. 1, all signs now point to Bullock being the No. 1 back when the season starts.

With Iowa running a slightly more up-tempo offense under

first-year offensive coordinator Greg Davis, Bullock's role as a running back will include the ability to catch passes out of the backfield and become a threat to opposing defenses when the Hawkeyes resort to the short passing game. The experience he had as a wideout last year, he said, has proven beneficial.

"It was great because I got to go out to receiver and work on route running and work on catching and then come back to running back and work on pass blocking," Bullock said. "It just helped me on both sides, so coming into this new offense that we have where the running back is able to play receiver and running back, it's going to be great because I have a good feel for both."

In filling this void, Bullock said he tries to emulate former NFL running backs such as Michael Bennett and Kevin Faulk, both of whom were known during their careers as being multi-dimensional.

Behind Bullock (for now anyway) are a pair of true freshmen – Barkley Hill and Greg Garmon. Hill is an in-state product having played at Cedar Falls High School, while Garmon hails from Erie, Pa. Both put up gaudy numbers in high school. Hill rushed for 2,493 yards and 40 touchdowns as a senior last fall, while Garmon compiled 2,859 yards and 27 touchdowns over a span of three years.

They aren't the only freshmen running backs Iowa has right now in terms of depth, but both Hill and Garmon are among those that, after Bullock, would be most likely to contribute.

"They're all talented guys, but they are all young," Iowa running backs coach Lester Erb said. "Things are moving a little bit fast for them, which we expect. But they've all shown flashes."

Then there's junior Brad Rogers, who is listed as the starting fullback but now might become prevalent in Iowa's rushing game as a feature back. Rogers made his return to the field midway

through last season after dealing with a heart condition that sidelined him for nearly an entire calendar year and actually ended up getting the Hawkeyes' first carry in the Insight Bowl loss to Oklahoma.

"They try to work it around so that I'm getting an equal amount of reps at both," Rogers said, adding he was unsure about how often the coaches would look to use him as a fullback.

With a relatively inexperienced group, the cause for concern with Iowa's running backs is legitimate and could continue to be that way in 2012 unless Bullock, Rogers or any of the freshmen backs elevate their game over the coming weeks and months.

"I think we have guys that are capable," Ferentz said. "Right now, we just have to piece that together."

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## **2012 Iowa position breakdowns: Quarterbacks**

*\*This week, HawkeyeDrive.com presents an eight-part series of position breakdowns as the Iowa Hawkeyes continue preparing for the 2012 season. Our first part examines the team's quarterbacks.\**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

When Greg Davis was first named offensive coordinator last February, one of the first players to embrace his new coach and the philosophy he would be bringing to Iowa City this fall



was James Vandenberg.

As a junior last season, the Keokuk native had his ups and downs. In some instances, Vandenberg showed flashes of brilliance, whether it was erasing a 21-point deficit to defeat Pittsburgh or showing touch on some of the touchdown passes he tossed. There were also instances however where he played poorly and the offense looked lackluster. Road losses to teams such as Penn State and Nebraska best illustrated those downs.

With new nomenclature and essentially a new culture, Vandenberg now has an opportunity entering his senior campaign to set a precedent with the leadership he provides to not just the offense, but the entire team.

“Nobody is more invested than James,” Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said. “Nobody works harder.”

Vandenberg threw for 3,022 yards in 2011, more than any other returning Big Ten quarterback entering this season. He tossed 25 touchdowns to only seven interceptions. Having gone through that full experience of being the starting signal-caller from the start of spring practices to the end of last season, Vandenberg believes what he can learn from the past will only aid him going forward.

“I don’t think you can quantify that or tell how much it does for you,” Vandenberg said. “But having a season under my belt, having a season being the starter and a spring being the starter again, just that continued experience I think it makes you more and more comfortable and the more comfortable you are, the easier it is to play at your best.”

While Vandenberg looks to thrive in this new offense, there’s also the question of who becomes the No. 2 quarterback on this Iowa team. Both Jake Rudock and Cody Sokol have had reps this fall with the second offense. Rudock has an edge as a redshirt freshman having been in the program for an entire year.

“You learn a lot. You learn game-planning,” Rudock said about what he took away from redshirting in 2011. “You learn as much about the offense as you can like every freshman is during camp and during the season, you start learning game-planning, what you check to in certain situations and that helps in being able to go to certain games. You get to see how the flow of things is.”

But with that being said, Davis replacing O’Keefe may have also evened the playing field for Sokol, who joined the Hawkeyes after playing two seasons at Scottsdale Community College in Arizona and for now at least, is listed as a junior. Last year as a sophomore, Sokol compiled 3,807 yards passing and tossed 43 touchdowns.

Regardless of whether Sokol ends up redshirting this year or not, he has two years of playing eligibility at Iowa.

“The plan is let us see what happens as we go through camp,” Davis said about whether a redshirt would be placed on Sokol this season. “If it were a perfect scenario, you’d like to redshirt Cody because Jake already redshirted and then both can come into spring training and battle from there.”

There’s also true freshman C.J. Beathard and fifth-year senior John Wienke, who is also competing to be the Hawkeyes’ punter this season and will handle the holding duties for Iowa in 2012, as he also did last season.

“That position overall, they’re learning,” Ferentz said. “They’re getting a lot of work right now and I’m really pleased with it.”

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# 8/11/2012: Iowa football video (Kid's Day)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – The Iowa Hawkeyes held their annual “Kid’s Day” practice on Saturday at Kinnick Stadium, which was open to fans and media alike.

Below are seven videos from Saturday’s practice, six of which include footage throughout the 11-on-11 portions and one video at the bottom featuring Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz sharing his thoughts on how the afternoon went.

**KIRK FERENTZ:**