

Big Ten

A glance at the games this week

Michigan at Indiana

12:20 p.m. EDT

The No. 10 Wolverines (5-1, 1-1 Big Ten) have had a week off to ponder the four turnovers that let Northwestern beat them and knock them from the national championship picture. They beat the Wildcats in every statistical category except the one that matters. Tim Biakabutuka continued his good season two weeks ago, as his 205 yards versus Northwestern raised his season total to 690. Although the Hoosiers (2-4, 0-3) have taken the early lead in the worst-team-in-the-conference race, they may be able to keep Biakabutuka from fattening those numbers. Their defense is allowing just 276.8 yards per game. But to find the Hoosier struggles, don't look to the defense. It's their offense that has shown an amazing ability to not gain yards.

The pick: Michigan, 31-6

Purdue at Ohio State

12:30 p.m. EDT (ESPN)

Ohio State returns to Columbus for the first time since Sept. 30, and the Horseshoe's probably never looked better. In the last two weeks, the No. 4 Buckeyes (6-0, 2-0) have come from behind in the second half to win two games in environments as hostile as any in college football: against Wisconsin in Madison and here against Penn State. In doing so, they have established themselves as the favorite for the Rose Bowl and as one of the best teams in the land. On offense, tailback Eddie George has captured some Heisman hype, and rightfully so. He is fourth in the nation with his 147.7 rushing yards per game. But what about Bobby Hoying? It's time the quarterback gets his named mention as one of college football's best. He is the second-highest rated passer in the country. An Purdue upset (2-3-1, 0-2-1) in this game would be to hold the Buckeyes under 50.

The pick: Ohio State, 56-23

Minn. at Michigan St.

1 p.m. EDT

I really thought the Spartans would be lucky to win two games this year. I really did. Sure, they had a fresh start in new coach Nick Saban, a talented quarterback in Tony Banks and a strong running game. But on paper, the defense looked so bad Saban asked the NCAA if they could make a rule disallowing Spartan opponents to pass unless they yelled "We're going to pass" while they were in the huddle. The NCAA said no, and the Spartans (3-2-1, 1-1-1) have given up 424.8 yards per game. But they have somehow won three games and have a shot at a bowl bid. Last week they beat Illinois in Champaign, adding fuel to the fire being lit under Illini Coach Lou Tepper's chair. The Golden Gophers (3-2, 1-1) lost a tough one to Northwestern last week, and have also been surprising. Their running game is generating just under 200 yards per game, and Coach Jim Wacker will try to pound the ball down their throats.

The Pick: Minnesota, 26-17

Wisconsin at N'western

12:30 p.m. EDT (ESPN2)

No. 11 Northwestern (5-1, 3-0) is the fourth ranked team No. 24 Wisconsin (2-2-1, 1-1) has played in its first six games, the other three being Colorado, Penn State and Ohio State. This should be a real tight football game, with the key being turnovers. Bold statement there, huh? Turnovers, the key to a ball game? Wow, is he ever smart. But seriously, that is where this game will be determined. Heading into this season, the Badgers were 11-1 over the last two years when quarterback Darrell Bevell did not throw an interception. In their two losses this season he's thrown four. The Wildcats have picked off seven passes through six games, and their +10 giveaway/takeaway ratio is the fifth-best in the land. That's the main reason Gary Barnett's troops are off to their best start since 1962. But since '92, Wisconsin is 5-1-1 against ranked Big Ten teams, and their rush defense will stuff Darnell Aunry.

The pick: Wisconsin, 24-20

Idle: Illinois (3-3, 1-2)

Picks by Brad Young

Engram keeping Lion drives alive

By ROB AMEN
Collegian Sports Writer

A stifling defense and heroics from wide receiver Bobby Engram helped Penn State pulled out a 26-23 victory over Purdue last week. Turning the ball over five times, it was a game the Lions probably should have lost.

In fact, without Engram, the Lions could be in staring at a 2-4 record and no bowl hopes instead of 4-2, 1-2 in the Big Ten, and New Year's bowl hopes still alive.

But those bowl dreams are not any easier to achieve this weekend when the No. 19 Lions visit No. 18 Iowa (5-0, 2-0) for a 3:30 p.m. kick-off tomorrow at Kinnick Stadium.

If the Lions hope to avoid another contest like last week, they will have to learn to hold on to the football. And an easy way to do that is throw it to Engram.

Despite two fumbles on punt returns this season, Engram has been the lone consistent offensive threat for the Lions. True freshman Curtis Enis has also shouldered much of the work load on offense, leading the team in rushing with 530 yards on 80 carries.

However, things will not come easy against Iowa. Despite being

blown out the last two meetings with Penn State, the Hawkeyes enter tomorrow undefeated after five games for the first time since 1986 and with one of the Big Ten's toughest overall defenses.

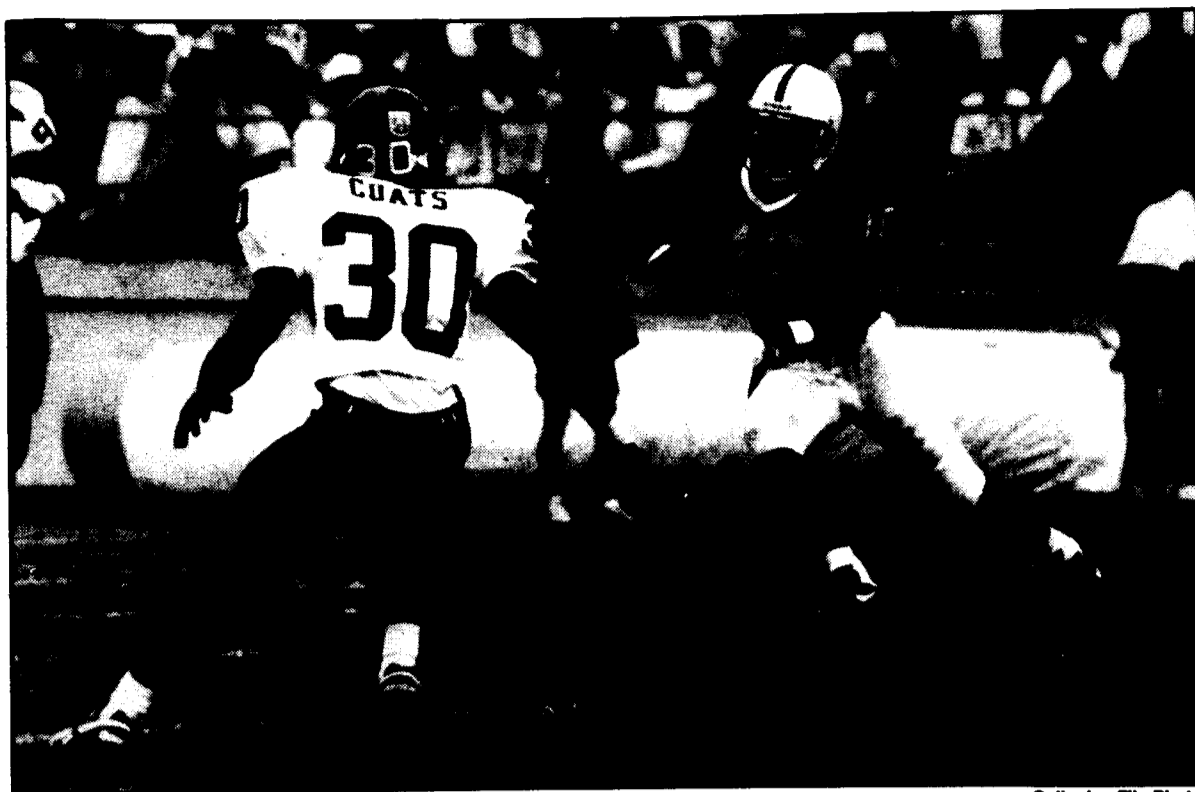
Led by linebacker Bobby Diaco, the Hawkeyes rank fourth in overall defense while leading the conference in scoring defense (12.8 points per game).

"The Iowa defense is strong and tough," Lion Coach Joe Paterno said. "They have some outstanding personnel and it will be a challenge."

That challenge will come from Diaco. The 6-foot-2, 235 pound linebacker leads the Hawkeyes with 62 tackles but the redshirt Diaco's greatest game came last week against Indiana when the redshirt junior recorded 26 tackles — 10 solo — three tackles for losses, forced and recovered a fumble and broke up a pass.

"There's a lot of confidence on this football team that we're capable," Diaco said. "There's also a lot of understanding that everyday we have to work as hard as we can to win football games."

"Our 5-0 record isn't going to beat Penn State," he added. "We're going to have to."



Collegian File Photo

Iowa cornerback Billy Coats tries to close in on Nittany Lion receiver Bobby Engram during their game last season. Engram's clutch play may come in handy tomorrow.

In order to do that, Diaco said that Iowa has to be able to force turnovers.

The Hawkeyes turnover margin is +5, meaning they have forced and recovered five more turnovers than their opponents. That is something Penn State was very vulnerable to last week, turning over the

ball, and if it is not careful, the same thing could happen again tomorrow.

Lion quarterback Wally Richardson said Iowa disguises its coverages and makes things look the same so opposing offenses cannot tell what the defense is doing until after they snap the ball. And in

order to avoid turning the ball over, Richardson said the offensive line has to step up to the challenge at hand.

"After three or four seconds and nobody is open," Richardson said, "I need to throw the ball away. I just can't stand back there and hold the ball."

Clint Holes trying to keep up with hero role

By MICHAEL SIGNORA
Collegian Sports Writer

Though surrounded by nearly 100,000 fervent fanatics, the defensive back is all alone. Isolation, solitude and separation are the unwelcome companions, and when even one slow stride means disaster, there's no place to hide.

Nary a member of the Penn State secondary has gone untouched, and the propensity to allow the big blast has caused dire consequences.

For hero Clint Holes, preventing the explosion tomorrow against Iowa at Kinnick Stadium is a primary objective.

"The main thing to stopping those long passes is concentration," the redshirt junior said. "You may think it's a running play and all of a sudden the receiver gets a bit behind you. That can be a problem and we just have to stay focused."

The pass defense has struggled in 1995, sitting ninth in the Big Ten.

Surrendering an average of 221.5 yards per game, the Lions have managed only six interceptions and allowed 11 touchdown tosses.

Coach Joe Paterno acknowledges the need to curtail enemy bombers and also aims to end breakdowns on third down. The boss believes his unit is rounding into form with the team close to becoming the potent defensive squad Penn State has been striving for.

"I thought we played a solid game against Purdue," Paterno said. "The same with Ohio State — except for three pass plays. They're going to hit those on lots of people. I'm comfortable with our defense. I think it's getting better."

The same can be said of Holes. Expected to provide depth in the secondary when the season commenced, the sudden injury to senior Jason Collins drastically altered assignments.

Called upon to take control at the hero spot, the Spring Church, Pa., native is now feeling comfortable as the No. 1 man at the position.

After being thrust into action early at Rutgers, ingratiating himself into the lineup took time.

Joining three defensive backfield starters and forming a cohesive unit cannot be developed overnight, but results are starting to show.

"When Clint first got out there I think he

was a little nervous," cornerback Brian Miller said.

"He's over that now and it makes a world of difference. We know he's back there for us and he's stepped it up."

This was apparent last weekend versus Purdue.

As Boilermaker quarterback John Reeves tried to squeeze the football to the tight end, Holes read the play. Moving more quickly than the intended target, the hero snagged the poorly thrown ball, intercepting his first pass of the season.

An 11-yard return set up Penn State deep in enemy territory.

Four plays later, kicker Brett Conway's third field

goal gave the Nittany Lions the lead.

"That's definitely a confidence booster anytime you can pick one off," Holes said. "It's what you hope to do back there because an interception at the right time can really swing the momentum."

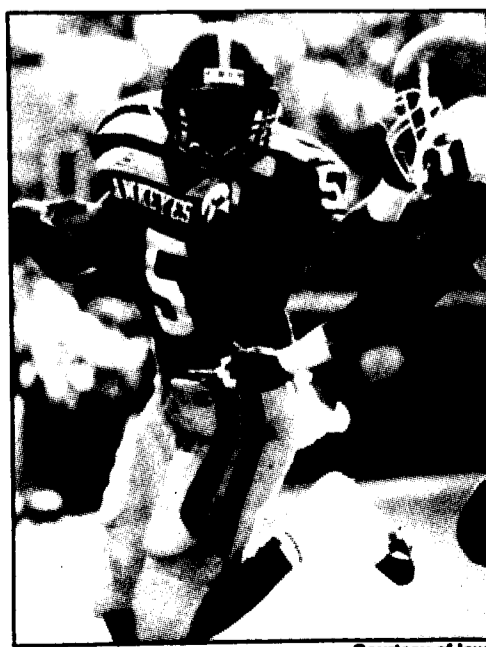
Five turnovers put the defense in difficult situations throughout the afternoon. Still, by limiting a dangerous offense to 23 points, the blue and white rose to the occasion, keeping a season on the brink from tumbling over the edge.

For Penn State to continue the climb toward regaining

conference supremacy, Iowa's rampaging rushing threat Sedrick Shaw must be contained. Holes is keenly aware of the threat, but is unwilling to disengage himself from the primary responsibility.

"Shaw's a great talent and we may have to come up and stop him," he explained. "We'll be ready to help, but we have to let the front seven stop the run. Our biggest job is pass defense."

Penn State is hoping dogged persistence pays off, as the team once again aims to shelf the opposing aerial attack. Chances this week may be better than before, as Holes rounds into form with his eye on grounding the Hawkeyes.



Courtesy of Iowa

Sedrick Shaw rushes for some of his 1,000-plus yards last season. The running back may miss the game tomorrow.

Iowa's Shaw may overcome injury to play

By ROB AMEN
Collegian Sports Writer

So far this season nothing has seemed to slow down Sedrick Shaw. The redshirt junior ranks fifth nationally with a 142.6-yards-per-game average and has amassed 713 yards on 131 attempts.

But a groin pull suffered against Michigan State on Oct. 7 has forced Shaw to miss practice this week and caused the Hawkeye tailback to be questionable for tomorrow's game with No. 19 Penn State.

Having Shaw miss the game may be the best defense for the Nittany Lions (4-2, 1-2 in the Big Ten). But more likely than not, Shaw will play and that can only mean bad news for the Lions.

"He's a really good running back," defensive lineman Brandon Noble said, "a scary guy to have in the backfield. His offensive line does a lot for him but he does things for himself. He has good speed, good feet and can hit the holes."

Shaw has benefited from hitting the holes fast. He averages 5.4 yards per carry, lead-

ing a Hawkeye offense that's averaging 32.6 points per game. The Austin, Tx., native became only the seventh Iowa running back to rush for over 1,000 yards in a season when he tallied 1,002 yards last season and his 250 yards against Michigan State is second-best all-time.

But No. 18 Iowa (5-0, 2-0) can do more than just run the ball.

Although the Hawkeyes rank first in the Big Ten in rushing offense, they also rank seventh in passing offense and third in scoring and total offense.

So Shaw is not the only weapon the Lion defense will have to address. Redshirt sophomore quarterback Matt Sherman took over for Ryan Driscoll last season and has flourished since. Sherman's record as a starter is 7-0, leading Iowa to its first 5-0 start since its 1986.

"Iowa's an excellent football team," Lion Coach Joe Paterno said. "They're sound with outstanding personnel. The tailback is one of the best in the country and the quarterback has never started a game they lost."

But since Penn State joined the Big Ten,

the Lions have owned Iowa. The Lions embarrassed the Hawkeyes 31-0 at Kinnick Stadium in 1993 before blowing them out at home last season 63-21.

However, this time, Iowa fields a different team from those in the past. This Hawkeye team possesses both a serious rushing and passing attack while its total defense ranks fourth in the conference.

"(Sherman)'s a drop-back passer, the kind I prefer to play because he doesn't scramble as much," Noble said. "He's definitely going to make things a little tough because they still have Driscoll."

Despite the depth at quarterback, Hawkeye Coach Hayden Fry said a key for his team will be to figure out the complicated Lion defense.

He said it is difficult to figure out what the Lions are doing because of the stunts, "twist-ups" and coverages they run.

"They've played some coverages this year that I've never seen before in college or pro ball," Fry said. "From a balance standpoint — run and pass — this will probably be the most difficult preparation that Matt's had."