

# PIGSKIN PREVIEW

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Photo illustration by Robin Tilley/Collegian

## AT A CROSSROADS

# Iowa serves as gauge for progress

### Hawkeyes once again have say in direction Lions' season goes

By **Brendan Monahan**  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The images of Jeremy Boone spinning and Adrian Clayborn scooping up the football and returning it for a touchdown are still seared into the minds of the Penn State faithful.

The Iowa defensive end stole away redemption, stifled national title hopes and continued the Hawkeyes' string of success over the Nittany Lions on his punt block and touchdown return in last year's showdown.

Iowa beat Penn State in seven of their last eight meetings, spanning the past decade, and won the last two matchups despite being the underdog.

A year later, the tables are turned.

Iowa has the experienced veterans, a senior quarterback and a dominant defense. Penn State is young, with a freshman quarterback and a defense just finding its identity.

The No. 17 Hawkeyes will host

the No. 22 Lions in an 8 p.m. ESPN showdown at Iowa City.

The start of the Big Ten schedule brings a new season to the field, and the Iowa game is the Lions' gauging meter, identifying how far Penn State has come since its last primetime game and how far the team still has to go.

"Iowa is a tough test on the road, just as Alabama was a tough test on the road," right guard Stefen Wisniewski said. "So, we'll be able to tell a lot about our team."

Already, the Iowa game has BCS bowl implications on the line. But for a young team still yet to reach its potential, Saturday's game holds more than just post-season implications.

Only three weeks ago, Alabama exposed the inexperience of the Lions by running through the Penn State defense, shutting down its rushing attack and taking advantage of the Lions' red zone flaws.

Penn State grew up since then. Red zone struggles still plague the

Lions, but the running game opened up. Rob Bolden took control, the defense tacked and the team came from behind against Temple last week.

That was against a team that reached a bowl game last season but not one like Iowa, which won the Orange Bowl and returned several big-name starters.

The Lions' second road test, in which flaws are highlighted on a primetime scale, is a chance to show they can compete with the experienced, top-tier teams.

Many people have lauded the Big Ten's depth this season, including Penn State coach Joe Paterno. But as Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz points out, the season is still young.

"I know everybody wants to know who is going to do what and all this stuff and how strong the league is, and who is going to win the Heisman," Ferentz said. "I think we'll all have a better idea here in about a month. There are so many things that can happen, locally, nationally."

The Lions could be a surprise team, but many question marks still remain. The offensive line needs to jell again after the loss of right tackle Lou Eliades. Chima Okoli, with no offensive line experience before this season, starts his first collegiate game in Eliades' place.

Bolden could also use more big-game experience as well as the linebackers and the defense, who seek to roll over the momentum from last week.

All the questions and potential, added with the primetime atmosphere, present a sort of make-or-break feel to the Iowa game, one that could ensure Penn State's continued progression or highlight the flaws of previous games.

"I don't know if it's necessarily a make-or-break game, but it's obviously a huge game, kicking off the Big Ten season," kicker Collin Wagner said. "The last two years they've beat us, but this year is definitely a new year."

Wide receiver Derek Moyer assessed the Iowa game the same

way. He said the matchup with the Hawkeyes isn't make or break but a game that can be used to prove the Lions' worth.

But proving their worth will be a difficult task, especially on the road. The Iowa game has its storylines, but none may be as important as the Lions reaching further potential on a national stage.

"It's very important especially because it's our Big Ten opener," Wisniewski said. "And you always want to get the Big Ten season started off on the right foot."

Or at least a quicker foot than last season, when Clayborn blocked the punt. The Lions, in a reversed role, look to play the redemption card again and put behind a decade's worth of losing to Iowa.

"Whenever a team beats you two times in a row, you're going to remember that," defensive tackle Ollie Ogbu said. "You're going to remember how you played and what they did to beat you."

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#### Daily Collegian Predictions

**Andrew J. Cassavell**



**Score:** Iowa 17, PSU 9

**What's good:** Double teams all night quiet DE Clayborn.

**What's bad:** The rest of Iowa's D-Line is pretty good, too.

**What to look for:** PSU's defense is over its early season struggles.

**Brendan Monahan**



**Score:** Iowa 21, PSU 13

**What's good:** Defensive intensity carries over.

**What's bad:** Iowa's front four disrupts running game.

**What to look for:** Whether or not new punt formation holds up.

**Audrey Snyder**



**Score:** Iowa 24, PSU 17

**What's good:** Finally a good measuring stick for Penn State.

**What's bad:** The offensive line struggles against Clayborn.

**What to look for:** Ricky Stanzi's second interception of the season.

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**VS. IOWA**

**GAME 5**

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