

Iowa Hawkeyes 2008 College Football Betting Preview

Contributed by
Wednesday, 16 July 2008
Last Updated Wednesday, 16 July 2008

After back to back 6-6 season records , Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz firmly believes his team has turned the corner and will be very competitive in 2008. The excuse the past couple of years has been, "We're young and inconsistent." This year fans are expecting bigger results now that the youth has grown up and should be ready to compete for the Big 10 Conference championship. Oddsmakers at online sports wagering leader Sportsbook.com also expect improvement having installed the Iowa Hawkeyes at 10-1 odds to win the Big 10 championship. Oddsmakers don't see Iowa's chances at winning a BCS National Championship as bright installed at 100/1 odds. With the low number of graduating seniors and lettermen off the roster, expectations are positive with a high number of returning lettermen and starters. The offense is expected to return eight starters while the defense returns five. Special teams will return both its top punter and placekicker. Junior quarterback Jake Christensen (6-1, 215) returns to lead the offense after starting every game last season. Christensen had an efficiency rating of 116.9 and threw for 2,269 yards and 17 touchdowns. He completed 198 of 370 passes and threw only six interceptions. He threw three or more touchdown passes in three games (Syracuse, Indiana and Western Michigan) last year. His passing yardage total is the 12th best in a single season at Iowa. He posted personal highs against Indiana when he completed 24 of 42 passes for 308 yards. Iowa enters the season with untested talent at running back. Sophomore Jevon Pugh (5-10, 210) is the only other running back with any experience on the roster. He rushed 17 times for 40 yards and an important touchdown in Iowa's overtime win over Michigan State. The return of senior tight end Tony Moeaki (6-4, 255), will be a welcome site who is back following a season ending injury in last year's Wisconsin game. He's considered an excellent blocker and an outstanding route runner. He played as a true freshman in 2005 and along side Scott Chandler, as a sophomore, in 2006. Moeaki has caught 33 career passes for 422 yards and six touchdowns. He'll be an important part of the Iowa's offense in 2008.

The 2007 season was one of learning, and gaining experience, for the Hawkeye offensive line. A number of new faces did the blocking for Iowa's o-line last year. Despite hitting some potholes along the way, the 2008 blockers should be bigger, stronger, better and have another year's experience. A pair of senior all-star candidates anchor Iowa's defensive line. All-America candidate Mitch King (6-3, 264) and all-Big Ten candidate Matt Kroul (6-3, 277) return as Iowa starters at tackle. Sophomore defensive end Adrian Clayborn (6-3, 275) will enter the season as the top end on the right side. Clayborn played in all 12 games last year and collected 20 tackles. He also had 2.5 tackles for loss, two sacks, a forced fumble and a blocked kick. He'll be no stranger to the playing field in 2008. Pushing Clayborn will be junior Chad Geary (6-3, 261), who played in seven games and collected 11 tackles with two sacks. Both have been biding their time and now have a chance at extensive playing time. On the other side of the line, sophomore Christian Ballard (6-4, 270) is listed No. 1 at left end. Ballard saw action in 10 games and had 15 tackles. He was also credited with four tackles for loss (-25 yds) and two sacks. Listed behind Ballard are redshirt freshmen Lebron Daniel (6-2, 220) and Broderick Binns (6-2, 245). Much like the situation at defensive end, Iowa will be looking for new talent to seize the opportunity at these two linebacking positions. Listed first at WILL linebacker is sophomore Jeff Tarpinian (6-3, 220). He played in 10 games and had 13 tackles. Backing him up will be sophomores Jeremiha Hunter (6-2, 222) and Troy Johnson (6-2, 215). Good news on the linebacking front is the return of Iowa's starting outside linebacker junior A.J. Edds (6-4, 244). Edds was Iowa's second leading tackler last season with 80 stops and 3.5 tackles for loss. Edds, a strong candidate for all-Big Ten honors this year, was steady in starting all 12 games for the Hawkeyes last year. He played as a true freshman, in 2006, starting once.