

Iowa-Nebraska in Black Friday Tussle for the Heroes Trophy

The Iowa Hawkeyes host the Nebraska Cornhuskers in the annual Black Friday Game where the winner also secures the Heroes Trophy for another year. The visiting team has won the last four games in this series, including Iowa's 28-20 victory in Lincoln a year ago.

Both teams have a lot at stake in this game. Nebraska still has a chance to tie for the Big Ten West title and go to the Big Ten Championship Game if Minnesota can upset Wisconsin in Minneapolis. But if Iowa wins, and the Badgers lose, the Hawkeyes can tie for the West title though they would not go to Indianapolis – that option is only available now for Wisconsin and the Cornhuskers. An Iowa win would also significantly improve its post-season bowl-slotting.

It's Senior Day in Iowa City and 14 Hawkeyes will play their last game at Kinnick Stadium. This group of seniors has seen a great deal of success, not the least of which was 2015's undefeated regular season and a trip to the Rose Bowl. Overall this class has participated in 34 wins, including 22 Big Ten victories – which is the third most under Ferentz. Those seniors include: C.J. Beathard, Ron Coluzzi, Cole Croston, Jaleel Johnson, LeShun Daniels, Faith Ekakite, Steve Ferentz, Anthony Gair, Mitch Keppy, Desmond King, George Kittle, Greg Mabin, Riley McCarron, and Ryan Ward. They will all be recognized in pre-game ceremonies.

Iowa is 7-4 overall, 5-3 in the Big Ten. Nebraska is 9-2 and 6-2 in conference play. The Huskers only two losses came at Wisconsin and at Ohio State.

Iowa Head Coach Kirk Ferentz is in his 18th year heading the Hawkeyes program with a record of 134-91. He is now tied for sixth in the Big Ten in conference wins and seventh in overall victories.

Nebraska Head Coach Mike Riley is in his second year in Lincoln where he is 15-9 – and in his 16th year as a college head coach with an overall record of 108-89.

Nebraska leads the series 29-14-3 but Iowa has won two of the last three games: 38-17 2013 and last year's 28-20 win – both played at Memorial Stadium. The Huskers won the 2014 game played at Kinnick in overtime 37-34. With the Heroes Trophy at stake, the Huskers hold a 3-2 advantage. The last time Iowa defeated Nebraska in Iowa City was a 10-7 win in 1981 – coincidentally the first game Kirk Ferentz coached in as an Iowa assistant under Hayden Fry.

A Nebraska win on Friday would result in a tie for the biggest improvement in the regular season win column from one season to the next in the school's history. In 2015 the Huskers were only 5-7 in the regular season. It would also be their first 10-win season since 2012.

This game closes out the regular season and both teams are bowl eligible. The Hawkeyes are bowl eligible for the 15th time in the last 16 seasons, winning six bowl

games in that span – which is the second most in the Big Ten after Ohio State’s eight wins.

This will be another national telecast on ABC with announcers Allen Bestwick, Mike Bellotti, and Kris Budden – and will be a featured showcase for both teams.

The game can be heard on the Hawkeyes Radio Network with Gary Dolphin, Ed Podolak, and Rob Brooks. It will be available on satellite radio XM and Sirius channels 81 – and will also be broadcast nationwide on Westwood One Sports with announcers Ted Emrich and Chuck Long.

Tidbits & Nuggets

Linebacker Josey Jewell became one of five finalists for the Butkus Award this week – awarded annually to the nation’s best college linebacker. Jewell also continues to lead the Big Ten in tackles with 105.

Iowa’s duo of running backs Akrum Wadley and LeShun Daniels are just the third set in Iowa program history to have 800 or more rushing yards in a single season – and they both have a chance to exceed 1000 yards with two games left (Nebraska and a bowl). But that will depend on the offensive line and play-calling.

C.J. Beathard is the fifth quarterback in Iowa history to win 20 or more games as a starter. He is 20-6 going into the Nebraska game and could finish his career at 22-6 by winning his last two games. Beathard is 10-3 at Kinnick, 10-1 in true road games, 13-4 in B1G contests, and 3-4 in games played against AP top 25 teams. Curiously enough, Iowa is 4-0 in games where C.J. passes for less than 100 yards. Two of those games were the last Iowa played – against Michigan and at Illinois.

Nebraska’s 7-0 start this season was its best since 2001 – and its 4-0 start in Big Ten play was also its best conference start since 2001 when it played in the Big 12.

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Posted 11/24/16