

Hawkeyes Mic: Hawkeyes – Cowboys Predictions (09/01/17) Plus Our Predictions for Iowa’s Regular Season Record

The Hawkeyes Mic picks are in for the Iowa-Wyoming game – and the entire season (we reserve the right to modify these during the bye week – or any other time for that matter). Finally...it’s unanimous once again. Apparently Tyler has come to his senses over the long layoff since his long drought last season. But our season predictions are kind of all over the place. Check them out – see if you agree or disagree...

Scott Dochterman – Iowa 38-20: This game reminds me more of the 2015 opener against Illinois State than the 2016 game against North Dakota State. Illinois State was coming off an FCS title-game appearances and returned a top quarterback and running back. But where Iowa won the game was along the line of scrimmage, and the Redbirds could do nothing about it. I see this game kind of the same way.

Wyoming gave up 203 yards a game and 5.31 yards per carry last year. Iowa had one of the nation's top offensive lines and two 1,000-yard running backs. I'm sure the Cowboys' run defense will improve under new defensive coordinator Scottie Hazelton but it's doubtful they can do it all in one year. Wyoming does have potential first-round draft pick Josh Allen at quarterback, but he's missing 142 receptions from last year's team.

As long as Iowa converts on third down and avoids giving up too many big plays, I think the Hawkeyes dominate. (*LandOfTen.com*; @ScottDochterman on Twitter)

Scott’s Season Prediction: Iowa once again finds itself the overlooked team in the Big Ten West Division. It's surprising that so often the Hawkeyes generate such little respect while others with marginal success like Nebraska and Northwestern are given the benefit of the doubt.

I think that plays itself in Iowa's favor this year. The Hawkeyes are strong up front on both sides of the ball. They have one of the nation's top offensive lines and two running backs who rushed for more than 1,000 yards each last year. There are a few areas of concern -- notably quarterback, wide receiver and the secondary -- which could cause problems. However, I think this team has more positives than negatives.

The schedule works against Iowa by playing East Division stalwarts Ohio State and Penn State at home, plus a road trip to Michigan State. Then you figure every other road trip is at a rival, and the task seems daunting. But Iowa's strengths will keep it in games and if the quarterback develops, the Hawkeyes could contend for the West Division title.

By season's end, I think Iowa might end up as the division's best team, but the schedule might prevent it from reaching the title game. I see Iowa at 9-3 and, like in 2008 or 2013, they could be the team nobody wants to face.

Steve Batterson – Iowa 31-21: The Nathan Stanley era opens with a win, a game decided in the second half by the strength of Iowa's front seven on defense. Josh Allen will create a little havoc, but not enough to earn the win. (*The Quad City Times*; @SBatt79 on Twitter)

Steve's Season Prediction: 7-5, 5-4 Big Ten.... September will be the difference between seven wins and a higher number. There will likely be some bumps along the way as offensive skill players and defensive backs settle into their roles. With five games in the first month of the season, those lessons may cost the Hawkeyes a win or two.

Tyler Tjelmeland – Iowa 31-16: Iowa starts slow on offense as Wyoming stacks the box to stop Wadley & Butler. Eventually the Iowa line will wear them down and the running game will get going. Wyoming QB Josh Allen will have at least two big plays through Iowa's banged up and suspended secondary. Expect it to be close for three quarters and Iowa to pull away as the bigger, stronger, and more physical team. (*HawkeyesMic.com*; @TylerTjelmeland on Twitter)

Tyler's Season Prediction: Iowa will go 8-4. It'll be a prototype season with a couple wins against teams they aren't supposed to beat and yet suffer a couple of unexpected losses. Iowa should start off strong, but trips to Wisconsin, Northwestern, and Nebraska coupled with a pair of tough home games against Penn State and Ohio State – there's at least a couple losses in there. Look for WR troubles and a heavy run game, but the offense should straighten out with Stanley at the helm. The defense front should be strong and plenty of long balls are to be found against a depleted secondary. A typical Iowa season. Some highs, some lows, and a News Years Day Bowl game.

Jack Brandsgard – Iowa 31-21: The matchups against Wyoming are interesting. Starting in the trenches, the Cowboys' offensive line is rugged and experienced, as is the Hawkeye defensive line. Iowa should be able to gain an advantage when their offensive unit takes the field, opening holes for the explosive Akrum Wadley. Wyoming gave up 98 (!) plays of 20+ yards last season, good for 128th in the country. I have a feeling that Wadley may break one or two big ones this game.

The battle between Wyoming's receivers and Iowa's corners is made up of inexperienced guys looking to prove their worth. The Cowboys lost their three top receivers from last year (143 catches, 2,455 yards, and 25 TDs worth of production), and Iowa saw Desmond King and Greg Mabin graduate, Manny Rugamba be suspended, and safety Brandon Snyder tear his ACL. The outcome of this game could rely heavily on the cat and mouse game between QB Josh Allen and the Iowa secondary.

Wyoming also lost their star running back Brian Hill, who rushed for 1,860 yards (third most in the country) and scored 22 TDs on the ground (fourth most). The Cowboys lose so much production and their defense is so prone to allowing the homerun play that I think Iowa takes advantage early and fends off Wyoming for the rest of the game. (*HawkeyesMic.com*; @JackBrandsgard on Twitter)

Jack's Season Prediction: My prediction is that Iowa will finish 7-5 this season. It will take Nate Stanley time to adjust to being a starting quarterback, and that process will be slowed as he develops chemistry with an unproven receiving corps. Iowa will rely heavily on two position groups that have served them well during Kirk Ferentz's tenure: offensive line and linebackers. Those two units must click on all cylinders from the beginning, otherwise Iowa could be in some trouble as the skill positions find their footing.

John Patchett – Iowa 38-20: Too many early season games in the Kirk Ferentz Era have been too close for comfort, win or lose (mostly wins) – and more often than not they tend to make fans very uncomfortable (at least until later in the 3rd and 4th Quarters. Wyoming is a good team with an excellent quarterback, who will be playing on Sundays next year. But Wyoming, while a likely contender in the Mountain West, is not the 2017 version of North Dakota State (shudders thinking about last year's game).

Keys will be how quickly new starting QB Nate Stanley clicks with his receivers (mostly young and inexperienced), how effective Iowa's running game will be (early and often), and how much pressure the Hawkeyes Defense can place on Josh Allen and make the Cowboys one-dimensional on offense. I think all of those are reasonably good possibilities. Also watch how effective Iowa's young defensive secondary will be without Manny Rugamba, who is suspended for this contest – on the other hand, Wyoming's receivers are young, too.

I'm not certain Iowa wants this one to come down to Special Teams (other than kick returns by Akrum Wadley) because there are new and inexperienced starters both on kicks and punts. But I don't think that will be the case. (*HawkeyesMic.com*; @HawkeyesMic on Twitter)

John's Season Prediction: I think this is one of the more difficult years to make a pre-season prediction in terms of Iowa's final record (and the kind of bowl slotting that will mean). While the Hawkeyes are loaded with veteran talent at some positions – linebacker, offensive line, and running back for example – it is extremely young at others – the two most critical are quarterback and receivers but the kicking game will see mostly newcomers too. And the defensive backfield is not deep in terms of veteran experience. Add the fact that probably the biggest wildcard is new Offensive Coordinator Brian Ferentz and a reportedly significantly revamped playbook – impacted by his own experience in the NFL and what the new offensive assistant coaches have brought from their previous stops. It's hard to say exactly what we should expect and/or when we will see it all actually gel.

Brian has said the core philosophy of Iowa's Offense will not change: a power running game and ideally run-pass balance. But most of us are expecting to see a more fleshed-out pro-style offense that will strategically try to stretch the field. Fans have been clamoring for more vertical passing since Greg Davis arrived. I think it's likely they're going to finally get their wish this season – assuming new starting QB Nate Stanley settles in quickly and efficiently. What will give this a reasonable chance is that the Hawkeyes should be a terrific running team with explosive veterans Akrum Wadley and new graduate transfer James Butler. Opposing defenses will try to load the box to slow down Iowa's running game – at least until the receivers show they can do the job. And while the WR corps is young, we've already seen flashes of speed and finesse from some of the true freshmen who will see early playing time. Oh, and don't forget the plethora of tight ends which might be relied on more earlier as the wide receivers gain some valuable experience.

I think fans ready acceptance of Brian as OC and their anticipation that Iowa's offense will be significantly improved in 2017 is likely to occur. Oh, and Defensive Coordinator Phil Parker has indicated this could be one of the more aggressive defenses he's had.

So...assuming all of that is reasonably close to what will actually happen, I'm going out on a more optimistic limb and say the Hawkeyes will finish the regular season 9-3:

- Wins – Wyoming, Iowa State, North Texas, Illinois, Minnesota, Purdue, Nebraska, Penn State or Ohio State, Wisconsin or Northwestern
- Losses – Michigan State, Ohio State or Penn State, Northwestern or Wisconsin

But remember, at this point, given what we know before the opening kick, your guess is certainly as good as mine.

Note: You can access the PDF version of our predictions [here](#).

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