

OCT. 12, 2019 ♦ MICHIGAN AT ILLINOIS

Game Info

Site: Memorial Stadium (60,670)

Kickoff: 12:00 p.m.

Television: ABC

Radio: Michigan/IMG Radio Network (950 AM in the Detroit Area; SiriusXM channel 83) with Dan Dierdorf, Jim Brandstatter and sideline reporter Doug Karsch, a regular contributor to TheWolverine.com.

Series Facts: The Wolverines hold a 70-23-2 all-time advantage over the Illini, and an 8-2 mark over the last 10, including four straight victories ... In Champaign, U-M is 10-1-1 over the last 12; the lone loss occurred in 2009 ... The two programs have not met since 2016, a 41-8 win for the Maize and Blue at The Big House ... Michigan enters the game ranked No. 16 by both the coaches and Associated Press ... Illinois' starting quarterback has been U-M transfer Brandon Peters, however he suffered an upper-body injury last week and his status is unknown for this contest.

Previewing Illinois With A Fighting Illini Insider

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

Doug Bucshon of Orange & Blue News was kind enough to swing by TheWolverine.com to break down Illinois' football team heading into its weekend showdown with Michigan in Champaign.

Bucshon analyzed the Illini's strengths and weaknesses, and also provided a prediction on how he thinks Saturday's game will play out.

ILLINOIS FOOTBALL'S PROJECTED STARTERS ON OFFENSE

• **Redshirt freshman QB Matt Robinson** — Bucshon revealed that redshirt junior quarterback Brandon Peters is "likely out" for this game after getting hurt last week at Minnesota, forcing Robinson into the starting role. The youngster has only completed 16 of 32 throws for 156 yards on the year, has yet to throw a touchdown or an interception, and has been sacked four times.

• **Fifth-year senior RB Reggie Corbin** — He is the Illini's best offensive player, with his 95.5 rushing yards per game checking in fourth in the Big Ten. Corbin has been one of the few bright spots for Illinois' team this season, averaging 6.6 yards per carry and already eclipsing 133 yards on two separate occasions (134 against Nebraska and 144 versus Eastern Michigan).

• **Redshirt junior WR Josh Imatorbhebhe** — The USC transfer has immediately

stepped in to lead the club in both receiving yards (220) and touchdown grabs (four), while checking in third in catches (15). In fact, Imatorbhebhe's four scoring receptions are tied for the second most in the Big Ten, with half of them coming in the 31-23 win at Connecticut Sept. 7.

• **Junior WR Ricky Smalling** — His 33 catches, 406 receiving yards and five touchdown grabs all paced the team last year, and although he leads the club once again in receptions (22), his 206 yards are second to Imatorbhebhe and his lone scoring catch is tied for third on the roster. Smalling has yet to compile more than 56 receiving yards in a game this year, but he has had at least 41 in four of Illinois' five outings.

• **Redshirt junior WR Trevon Sidney** — Like Imatorbhebhe, Sidney also transferred in from USC after spending his first three collegiate years in Los Angeles. His 16 receptions are the second most on the team, though his 123 yards check in fourth and his 7.7 yards per reception ninth.

• **Sophomore TE Daniel Barker** — He hauled in nine catches for 84 yards last season as a freshman, and has already reeled in nine receptions for 151 yards this time around. Barker's 16.8 yards per catch and two scoring grabs are both the second-best marks on the team.

• **Junior LT Vederian Lowe** — He started seven games as a freshman in 2017, and has begun all 17 of the club's outings since then. His 79.3 overall grade (64 is considered average) from Pro Football Focus (PFF) makes him the second-best offensive player for the Illini, and also ranks 22nd among all offensive tackles nationally.

• **Redshirt sophomore LG Kendrick Green** — He is riding a string of 17 straight starts entering this weekend's game, and has actually begun every contest he has ever appeared in, in Champaign. PFF has tabbed Green as the sixth-best offensive guard in the nation so far, with a 77.9 overall grade.

• **Redshirt junior C Doug Kramer** — He has started 20 consecutive affairs entering the Michigan showdown, and was actually listed on the preseason Rimington Award watch list (given annually to the game's best center). Kramer has lived up to the hype in 2019, with PFF naming him the nation's seventh-best center so far (78.2).

• **Fifth-year senior RG Richie Petitbon** — He transferred in from Alabama after appearing in just 11 games during his four years there. Petitbon's 68.7 mark from PFF is the lowest of the Illini's five starting linemen, but is obviously still above average.

• **Junior RT Alex Palczewski** — He has the longest stretch of consecutive games started among Illinois' front five, having begun 28 straight dating back to the final 11 of his freshman campaign in 2017. Palczewski has earned a solid 74.4 grade from PFF this year, including a 77.4 tally as a pass blocker.

ILLINOIS FOOTBALL'S PROJECTED STARTERS ON DEFENSE

• **Redshirt junior DE Oluwole Betiku** — Yet another transfer from USC, Betiku has some of the best numbers of any defensive player in the country in 2019. His seven sacks are tied for the third most in the nation, while his 10.5 tackles for loss are tied for fourth.

• **Fifth-year senior DT Jamal Milan** — He only has 13 tackles and one stop behind the line of scrimmage, but his 74.4 PFF grade checks in as the fifth best on the Illini defense. Milan's PFF mark of 75 against the run is also the fifth best of any Illinois defender.

• **Senior DT Tymir Oliver** — He has racked up 3.5 tackles for loss and 1.5 sacks, the latter of which is tied for the third-highest total on the team. PFF has also tagged him with an overall tally of 75.4, which ranks third on the club's defense.

• **Redshirt junior DE Ayo Shogbonyo** — He has turned into a force in his first season with extensive game action, with his 6.5 tackles for loss ranking second on the team. Shogbonyo had just 22 career tackles entering 2019, but is already close to matching that total with 17 so far this year.

• **Senior LB Dele Harding** — His 11.2 tackles per game not only lead the Big Ten, but are the sixth most in the country. Harding has also chipped in 4.5 tackles for loss and two interceptions, including a 40-yard pick-six last Saturday at Minnesota.

• **Redshirt junior LB Jake Hansen** — The veteran has racked up an impressive stat line in 2019, with 39 tackles (second most on the team), 5.5 tackles for loss (third), 2.5 sacks (second) and four forced fumbles (most). His 82.1 overall grade from PFF is not only the highest on Illinois' entire defense, but also 5.3 points better than anyone else's (Betiku's 76.8 grade is next best).

• **Redshirt junior LB Milo Eifler** — The Washington transfer has compiled 23 tackles and 3.5 stops behind the line of scrimmage after accumulating just six tackles during his two years in Seattle. The highlight of Eifler's career came last week at Minnesota when he ran back a fumble recovery seven yards for a touchdown in the Illini's 40-17 loss.

• **Junior CB Nate Hobbs** — He is the most experienced among the Illini defensive backs expected to start on Saturday, with 22 career starts under his belt. Hobbs has 27 tackles and three passes broken up on the year, though his 57.9 PFF grade is obviously underwhelming.

• **Freshman CB Devon Witherspoon** — Last weekend at Minnesota was his first career start and though he's expected to earn the nod once again on Saturday, sophomore Jartavius Martin will see plenty of time as well (Martin has played 299 snaps on the year, compared to Witherspoon's 100). The freshman has struggled mightily this season, with his 54.7 PFF mark ranking 27th out of the 32 Illini defenders who have seen the field.

• **Sophomore S Delano Ware** — His 56.5 overall PFF grade is the second lowest of Illinois' 11 projected starters, only beating out Witherspoon. Ware has especially struggled against the run, with his 50.3 tally standing as the third lowest of the 31 Illini defenders who have attempted to stop the rush this season.

• **Junior S Tony Adams** — He has racked up 25 tackles and three tackles for loss, after accumulating 43 stops, 3.5 tackles for loss and four passes broken up last season. PFF has declared Adams as a below-average run defender (62.3), tackler (42.3) and coverage man (62).

ILLINOIS FOOTBALL'S PROJECTED STARTERS ON SPECIAL TEAMS

• **Redshirt junior K James McCourt** — He has connected on 4 of 6 field goal attempts, including a perfect 2 of 2 mark from beyond 50 yards. McCourt's two misses on the year came from 30 yards out against Akron and from 43 yards out versus Minnesota.

• **Junior P Blake Hayes** — His 44.9-yard average is the third best in the Big Ten, and he has recorded at least one 50-yard punt in four of Illinois' five games. Hayes has also been incredibly consistent, averaging at least 43.1 yards per punt in four of the club's five outings.

Illinois Football's Biggest Strength On Offense

"Illinois is primarily a running team, and they've had some success on the ground over the last couple of seasons," Bucshon explained. "Fifth-year senior running back Reggie Corbin is the go-player on offense. Corbin is currently fourth in the Big Ten in rushing, averaging 95.5 yards per game.

"Still, the Illini running attack stalled last week in the 40-17 loss at Minnesota, managing just 91 yards and 3.4 yards per carry. They will need to get back on track on Saturday if Illinois hopes to keep things close versus the Wolverines."

Illinois' rushing attack has averaged 163.2 yards on the ground this season, which ranks among the middle of the pack in college football at 63rd (out of 130 teams) nationally.

Perhaps a bit surprisingly, the rushing production between the Illini's wins and losses have been almost identical — they average 170 yards per outing in the two victories against Akron and Connecticut, and 159.6 yards per game in the losses to Eastern Michigan, Nebraska and Minnesota.

Illinois Football's Biggest Weakness On Offense

"Illinois thought they would improve the passing game when it brought in Michigan grad transfer quarterback Brandon Peters, a player Wolverines fans are very familiar with," the analyst noted. "But it hasn't materialized yet. Illinois hasn't been able to consistently move the ball through the air or make big plays.

"Two other transfers, Josh Imatorbhebhe and Trevon Sidney from USC, bolstered the talent level in the wide receiver corps. But Peters has been under duress and the Illini have allowed 15 sacks through five games.

"Now Peters is likely out with an injury, and the burden falls on redshirt freshman quarterback Matt Robinson."

Peters' numbers weren't exactly off the charts so far this year, but his 10 touchdown passes were nonetheless tied for the fifth most in the Big Ten.

With the Indiana native likely out with injury, the Wolverine defense should be able to tee off against redshirt freshman Matt Robinson, who has only connected on 50 percent of his 38 career passes.

Illinois Football's Biggest Strength On Defense

"Illinois doesn't do much well on defense, but they are good at taking the ball away, which has been a staple of [head coach] Lovie Smith defenses," Bucshon revealed. "The Illini lead the Big Ten in forced fumbles, led by redshirt junior linebacker Jake Hansen with four. Turnovers kept Illinois close in the 42-38 loss to Nebraska in week four.

"Last week, the defense scored the only touchdowns for Illinois against Minnesota, one on a pick-six by senior middle linebacker Dele Harding and another score on a fumble recovery that redshirt junior linebacker Milo Eifler scooped up and returned for a TD."

The Illini's 12 forced turnovers are actually tied for the eighth most in the nation, with the club's eight fumble recoveries tied for second in the land.

On the flip side, it's no secret that fumbles have been a major issue for the Wolverine offense this year, with their seven lost checkings in 122nd in college football.

Illinois Football's Biggest Weakness On Defense

"There are numerous issues on defense," the analyst began. "Illinois ranks near the bottom of the Big Ten in nearly every measurable statistic. Opponents have found success on the ground and through the air. Illinois has been steamrolled up front, yielding 183 yards per game on the ground. Minnesota rushed for 332 yards last week, including 211 yards from [sixth-year senior running back] Rodney Smith.

"Opposing quarterbacks have passed for over 1,200 yards against Illinois. They give up big plays. They can't get stops on third down. It's a defense that's struggling in just about every way right now."

Illinois hasn't been able to effectively stop the run or the pass this season, ranking 98th nationally in the former and 83rd in the latter.

The Illini put together impressive defensive outings in the first two games against Akron and Connecticut (yielded an average of 238.5 yards between the two affairs), but saw the bottom fall out after that, giving up an average of 552.3 yards in losses to Eastern Michigan, Nebraska and Minnesota.

BUCSHON'S FINAL SCORE PREDICTION

"I may be generous in predicting Illinois to score 10 points against a Michigan defense that looks to be coming into its own after a dominating performance against Iowa last week," Bucshon said. "With Peters likely out, the Illinois offense is going to be one-dimensional and I just don't see them consistently moving the chains against the Wolverines.

"Even though the Michigan offense has been spotty at times, they should be able to control the ball against Illinois and put points on the board. It's a mismatch in the trenches. I wouldn't be surprised to see freshman running back Zach Charbonnet have a career day for the Wolverines."

Michigan 42, Illinois 10

Keys To The Game: Michigan Wolverines Football at Illinois

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

Michigan faces Illinois Saturday as more than a three-touchdown favorite in Champaign, having won two games in a row. The defense has been impressive in both contests, the offense in one (a 52-0 win over Rutgers).

A victory over the Illini won't really move the needle either way unless this one is tight.

A loss, of course, would end the Wolverines' already-slim Big Ten title chances. One outlet already has Michigan's chances at less than four percent to win the conference, with U-M sitting at 2-1 with a 35-14 loss at Wisconsin already hung on them. If Michigan somehow wins the rest of its Big Ten regular-season games, odds are the Badgers would await them in the championship contest.

We're getting ahead of ourselves, of course. U-M must first get by a banged-up Illinois team before facing a loaded back end of the schedule, and maligned head coach Lovie Smith will have to do it with an injured quarterback corps. Former Wolverine Brandon Peters is the man if he's healthy, but he struggled in last week's 40-17 loss to Minnesota (5-of-10 passing for 32 yards with an interception) even before getting hurt.

"They're getting better. We're hopeful," Smith, always mum on injuries, said. "We'll need everyone to be able to beat a team like Michigan."

Even then, it might not be enough. The Illini haven't cracked 300 yards in either of their last two games, losses to Nebraska and the Golden Gophers, despite putting up 38 points on the Cornhuskers.

Michigan didn't either in its win over Iowa, held to 267 yards of offense and hitting on only two explosive plays.

Here's what the Wolverines have to do to get out of Champaign with a comfortable victory Saturday:

Make life miserable for the Illinois quarterbacks: Illinois is tied for 110th out of 130 schools in sacks allowed per game, giving up 3.0 per contest. Michigan is coming off an eight-sack performance against a solid Iowa offensive line, and it could have been worse. U-M badgered quarterback Nate Stanley throughout last Saturday's contest and added a number of hurries in addition to the sacks.

As defensive coordinator Don Brown noted, Stanley is capable of picking teams apart if given time. He was going to make sure that didn't happen. The Illinois quarterbacks might not have that same ability, and we have no idea which ones will play. Neither does quarterbacks coach Rod Smith, a former U-M assistant under Rich Rodriguez.

"We'd better have two quarterbacks ready because you never know what's going to happen," Smith said in his weekly meeting with reporters. "We have a group of five

in my room. Depending on who can get reps and who won't, we'll divvy it up then. Brandon Peters and [freshman] Isaiah Williams both were on the injury list, I guess, so you've got Matt Robinson, Coran Taylor and Cam Miller."

Robinson at least moved the offense a bit in last week's game, and he can move himself. They'd run more read-option stuff with him if he were in the game, Smith said — something else to watch.

But this should be a matchup nightmare for the Illini against a very fast Michigan defense.

Run the football well on early downs ... and every other down: Michigan's ground success this year has been sporadic, at best. There's been only one carry over 18 yards this season — one — and that was in the opener, a 41-yarder by freshman Zach Charbonnet against Middle Tennessee State.

This Illinois team ranks 98th nationally in run defense, giving up 183.2 yards per game on the ground and 4.11 per carry. Minnesota's Rodney Smith rushed for 211 yards against the Illini last week and made it look easy at times.

Michigan can't afford to be one-dimensional offensively in the back half of the schedule if it wants to remain in contention for a Big Ten Championship. This is the game to get up early and work on the running game. Part of that is demanding the same effort on every snap that we've seen out of Brown's defense the last two weeks.

No plays off — on either **side** of the ball.

Make the Illini throw: Illinois has some capable backs, led by 2018 1,000-yard rusher Reggie Corbin. He averaged 8.5 yards per carry en route to All-Big Ten third-team honors (media) last season and is at 6.6 this year, including several explosive runs. He's had a 66-yarder as his long this year, notched an 80-yarder last season and the 5-10, 200-pound burner is a threat anytime he gets the ball.

He also enters the game as Pro Football Focus' No. 3-ranked running back in the entire nation (among those with at least 40 attempts), boasting an elite grade of 87.2.

Corbin doesn't just do it against the patsies, either. He averaged 7.9 yards per rush last year vs. Penn State, put up 100 and 11.1 per carry against Wisconsin, and posted a 6.0 clip against Northwestern's stout front a season ago.

U-M could be without junior end Kwity Paye in this game, a guy Brown called perhaps the best spread offense run stopper in the country. One recipe to keep this game close — allow Corbin to go off and shorten the game with ball possession.

The Breakdown: Michigan Football At Illinois

Simply put, Illinois is a mess. The Illini lost at home to Eastern Michigan with a healthy Peters (34-31 on Sept. 14), were terrible on both sides of the ball in a loss at Minnesota (40-17 last week) and just haven't put it together under Smith.

The offense is 6 for 29 on third downs in the last two games against average-at-best defenses.

We have faith the U-M defense will do its part Saturday. The offense, however, still needs to prove it can be efficient against anyone better than Rutgers. This would be a great time to get it humming with a loaded back half of the schedule on tap, starting next week at Penn State.

Michigan Wolverines Football News & Views: On Harbaugh's Offense, More

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

Breaking down Jim Harbaugh's Monday comments on his offense, pay for play and more, all in news and views format:

NEWS: Michigan is 95th nationally in red-zone offense (scoring 77.3 percent of the time) and tied for 93rd in total offense (367.0 yards per game) through five contests.

HARBAUGH: "The red zone is something that's been good for us. As I said after the game, I feel like we're very close offensively and very close to hitting our stride, hitting on all cylinders. [There's] really good evidence to back that up and also what I see.

"I think it's coming; I think it's showing. As I said earlier, a top defense in the country against Wisconsin, a top defense against Iowa. There's a point where you say, 'Good job. Well played. That was a good game,' recognizing the efforts of the opponent and your own players.

"I feel with our team, the effort is great. Off the charts. At the highest level. And when you get that, then you can get everything else."

VIEWS: Yes, Harbaugh was asked "the hard question" of what evidence he had that nobody else was seeing on Saturday.

"In all areas," he said. "Run game, pass game, protection ... quarterback, receiver, running backs. It's an evolving, improving group. I've seen them be at a really high level in practice consistently and a really high level in games, and getting that consistently high level in both games and practice is what I feel what I see coming."

We can't speak for practice other than to say others we trust share his view, but it's been one game, maybe — against Rutgers — in which they put it all together. And let's face it ... anyone with a pulse puts up 50-plus on Rutgers.

We also acknowledge that Iowa's defense appears to be the real deal this year,

though we'll find out more Saturday night in Iowa City when they face Penn State.

"After looking at the ballgame, after really looking at tape and reviewing it, first of all, I came away with the feeling that Iowa had a really good defense," Harbaugh noted. "I think they ranked second or in the top five after this ballgame. Really, really good.

"You've got to give Phil Parker and the Iowa defense and their players a lot of credit. They have a good team and a heck of a good defense."

But then he listed reasons why drives stalled: a false start penalty, inability to convert a third-and-three, a trick play on first down that lost nine yards. Added up, it's the same thing we've been seeing from the offense all year — one guy on one play screwing something up, then another guy on the next. The result is a sputtering offense that's just not good enough, and at this point seems like "it is what it is."

That doesn't bode well for the tough, second half of the schedule.

NEWS: Jim Harbaugh proposed rewarding schools who "do it the right way" in recruiting (i.e. no cheating) to help level the playing field.

HARBAUGH: "It seems documented. A voice recorder or videotape and then, a day or two later, nobody says anything about it. It's accepted as business as usual.

"If there's one thing that I think the coaches' association could do it would be a reward system for not violating the rules. A reason for the honest guy to prosper. Haven't seen any of those measures implemented."

VIEWS: And you won't. There are too many universities whose alumni bases' self-worth is based on winning football or basketball games so they don't have to put up with the misery of facing their friends who might happen to be fans of their rival.

Make no mistake — Michigan's demise to mediocrity the last 15 years or so was pretty much self-inflicted with a couple of bad hires. Bill Martin had no succession plan and blew up the culture with his Rich Rodriguez hire, and while Brady Hoke might have succeeded in keeping it solid (at least much better) had he been hired in 2008 with Lloyd Carr's assistants, he couldn't get it done as a fixer.

At the same time, the NCAA is worthless when it comes to protecting the sanctity of the game. The reason Harbaugh's proposal won't work is because the worst of the worst rarely get caught. They're so good at it now that they'd actually be rewarded like the programs that actually do things the right way, even though everyone knows who they are.

The system is broken. Frankly, it might never get fixed.

NEWS: California passed a law in which amateur players can be paid for their likeness. Harbaugh was asked if pay for play could help curb cheating.

HARBAUGH: "I've explored it in my own mind. I wouldn't be against that. There could be a system — like the scholarship, it's really worth upwards of \$100,000 or more when you factor in room and board, the food, the travel ... per scholarship for 85

players. You could have a system that cuts all scholarships in half. Instead of 85 scholarships, there are 42 scholarships. Forty-two players will play on scholarship plus the \$100,000.

"If you did that across all sports, athletics could stay the same. It could be financially feasible. There's amateur and then there's pro. There's no restriction when somebody can take a shot and go play."

VIEWS: Which is great ... except the going rate for elite players is well above that, and whatever they're being "paid" when it comes to scholarship and stipend will be doubled or tripled by boosters at the dirty schools.

End of short rant.

Wolverine Watch: Seeking A Logic-Defying Finish

John Borton • TheWolverine

There's a logical ending to Michigan's 2019 football campaign, based on nearly a half-season's worth of results.

U-M fans hope their Wolverines can defy logic.

They've played two quality Big Ten teams to this point. At Camp Randall Stadium, Wisconsin's Badgers treated Michigan like a rusted-out junker getting a buck-a-whack treatment with sledgehammers at the county fair. In The Big House against Iowa, some were buoyed by coordinator Don Brown's resurgent defense in a 10-3 win.

Others chafed over the narrow victory margin, derisively renaming Michigan's "speed-in-space" offense "Lost In Space."

Torches and pitchforks aside, what makes sense?

This does. The Wolverines travel to Champaign and ultimately pummel an Illinois crew that lost at home to Eastern Michigan — but not by enough to ease all fears.

Michigan then goes and drops two in a row — first under the lights in Happy Valley, where Penn State has been flexing on bad teams. Then at home against a Notre Dame crew, which lost only to powerful Georgia and still has its Irish eyes fixed on the College Football Playoff.

The Wolverines get healthy again at Maryland, which is imploding, and go deja blue

against Michigan State, winning 10-3 in the battle of strong defenses.

U-M escapes in its every-other-year overtime battle at Indiana. Jim Harbaugh's team pulls it out in triple OT, with octogenarian IU fans who actually remember their team's last win in the series (that'd be 1987) chanting, "Wait 'til 2021!"

Then the Wolverines line up against an Ohio State team that just might be the strongest crew of Buckeyes a Jim Harbaugh squad has faced. No Urban? No issues. The machine in Columbus is blasting opponents by an average of 43.8 points per game.

Michigan State came away so happy to have lost by only 24 in Columbus, the Spartans sang all the way back to East Lansing. Then they torched six couches, a couple of footrests and a box of incriminating documents in celebration.

Logic says Michigan loses that last game — again. Perhaps decisively.

Here's the thing about logic, though. It's not carved in stone. It's not unassailable. It's not the determiner of all outcomes.

Ask Bo Schembechler's 1969 crew. There was no way it would ever beat Ohio State that year. Nobody could — until they did.

Ask Tom Brady. The New England Patriots had zero shot — zero — of coming back from a 25-point third-quarter deficit to win Super Bowl LI over Atlanta in 2017 — until they did.

Now, Harbaugh's present crew bears little resemblance to the '69 Wolverines or the New England Patriots. But the truth is, it doesn't have to, to avoid the logical finish.

It just has to improve — and quickly.

Harbaugh shook up the semi-faithful when he said Michigan's offense is "hitting its stride," after the Iowa game. The Wolverines produced all of 10 points against the Hawkeyes — none over the final 51:27 of the game's 60 minutes.

Some felt the head coach sounded delusional with his offensive assessment. Some went for calculating, knowing he's not inclined to publicly rip his team.

On Monday, he doubled down — but with a fuller explanation.

"I feel we're very close offensively — very close to hitting our stride, hitting on all cylinders," the coach said. "We have really good evidence to back that up. It's what I see."

It's what a lot of people saw on paper, coming into the season. They saw a senior quarterback, a bevy of excellent wide receivers, a mostly returning offensive line filled with some level of All-Big Ten performers.

It also featured veteran tight ends and young talent at running back. But when Wisconsin shut the Wolverines out for nearly the first three quarters and Iowa did over the last three, many waded up the paper — and pitched it.

Don't bail early, Harbaugh seemed to indicate.

He sees the evidence, he said, in "all areas — run game, pass game, protection, quarterback, receiver, running backs. It's an evolving, improving group. I've seen them be at a really high level in practice, consistently, and a really high level in games.

"Getting that consistently high level in both games and practice is what I feel, what I see coming."

Harbaugh is convinced onlookers undersold Iowa's defense. He also believes anyone writing off Michigan's offense at this point has jumped the gun.

"I think it's coming," he said. "I think it's showing. Top defense in the country against Wisconsin, one of the top defenses in Iowa. There's a point where you actually say, 'Good job. Well played...'"

"I feel with our team, the effort is great. Off the charts. At the highest level. When you get that, you can get everything else."

Logic insists you need more than the ninth-best scoring offense, 10th-best total offense and 11th-best rushing offense in the Big Ten to get much of anything.

The man with the whistle sees more coming, and he's the one who ultimately must get it going.

By The Numbers: Saturday Was U-M's Best Performance Vs. The Run Under Brown

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

When the Michigan Wolverines football team held Iowa to one rushing yard in last Saturday's 10-3 win, it marked the fewest yards on the ground that defensive coordinator Don Brown's crew had yielded in a game during his three-plus years on the job (he took over prior to the 2016 season).

That statistic takes on a bit more significance when considering Brown's 2016 defense finished deadlocked with Alabama as the country's best unit (261.8 yards allowed per game), while his 2017 squad finished third (271.0) and his 2018 group second (275.2).

It's also important to note that Iowa had run for 351 yards and averaged 6.9 yards per attempt the previous week in a 48-3 victory over Middle Tennessee State, and had been averaging 217.5 yards per game on the ground entering the Michigan contest to rank 29th nationally.

U-M, meanwhile, was gashed for 359 rushing yards at Wisconsin just two weeks prior, the most ever under Brown at Michigan and the most the Wolverines had given up in a game since yielding 369 to Ohio State in 2015.

In other words, Brown's unit's worst-ever showing against the run at U-M was followed by its best just two weeks later.

Not only was the Maize and Blue limiting Iowa to one yard on the ground the team's most impressive defensive performance against the rush since holding Northwestern to minus-nine yards in 2014, but it also marked its second-best performance since 2007.

Saturday's effort was Michigan's sixth-best showing against the run since 2000, and the third time that Brown's Wolverines held an opponent to 20 rushing yards or fewer in a game (see chart below).

The 14 Times Michigan's Defense has Allowed 20 Rushing Yards or Fewer in a Game Since 2000			
Season	Game	Rushing Yards Allowed	Opponent Yards per Carry
2019	Iowa	1	0
2018	at Michigan State	15	0.7
2017	vs. Florida*	11	0.4
2014	at Northwestern	-9	-0.3
2007	Notre Dame	-6	-0.2
2006	Northwestern	-13	-0.8
2006	at Penn State	-14	-0.6
2006	Wisconsin	12	0.4
2006	at Notre Dame	4	0.2
2006	Central Michigan	16	0.8
2005	Eastern Michigan	15	0.6
2004	Iowa	-15	-0.5
2002	Utah	13	0.7
2001	Western Michigan	13	0.5

* — neutral location

The 2006 Maize and Blue defense limited five of its 13 opponents to 16 rushing yards or fewer, en route to finishing with the best run defense in the country (an average of just 43.0 yards on the ground per game).

That total stood as the best in college football since at least 2004 (which is as far back as ESPN's statistics database goes), with only one No. 1-finishing rush defense since then allowing fewer than 65 yards on the ground per game (TCU's 48.7 in 2008).

Perhaps what's most impressive about the 2006 club's front seven, however, were the opponents it shut down — a Wisconsin club that finished 12-1 (held to 12 rushing yards by U-M), a 10-3 Notre Dame squad (four yards) and a Penn State crew who concluded at 9-4 (minus-14 yards).

That same perspective can be used to laud Saturday's defensive effort, especially when considering how seldom Iowa's ground game has been shut down during the Kirk Ferentz era (since 1999, making him the longest-tenured coach in college football).

Since 2006, the Hawkeyes have been held to 20 rushing yards or fewer in a contest just four times (including Saturday against Michigan), and only eight times since 2000.

The Eight Times Iowa has Rushed for 20 Yards or Fewer in a Game Since 2000			
Season	Game	Rushing Yards	Yards per Carry
2019	at Michigan	1	0
2018	vs. Mississippi State*	-15	-0.8
2017	at Michigan State	19	0.8
2012	Penn State	20	0.9
2005	at Ohio State	-9	-0.5
2004	at Minnesota	6	0.2
2004	at Michigan	-15	-0.5
2000	Ohio State	13	0.3

* — neutral location

It's difficult to pinpoint one aspect that has led to U-M's defensive ascension, though the return of redshirt junior defensive tackle Michael Dwumfour from injury has arguably been the most important factor.

He was injured after playing just one snap in the season opener against Middle Tennessee State Aug. 31, and didn't return again until the blowout of Rutgers Sept. 28.

In the three contests without him in the lineup, the Wolverines gave up an average of 208.6 rushing yards per game; in the two showdowns since his return, however, they've yielded just 24.5 ground yards per outing.

BY THE NUMBERS: MICHIGAN FOOTBALL AT ILLINOIS

5th Straight noon game for Michigan on Saturday, with at least two more to come (at Maryland Nov. 2 and Ohio State Nov. 30). The Wolverines will have a minimum of seven 12 p.m. starts in 2019, after playing just five regular-season noon contests last year.

10 Touchdown passes for Illinois redshirt junior quarterback Brandon Peters this season, to go along with four picks, a 58.3 completion percentage and average of 159.4 passing yards per game. Peters threw just four touchdown passes during his

three years at Michigan, and is questionable for Saturday's game after departing last weekend's loss at Minnesota with injury.

10.5, 7.0 Tackles for loss and sacks, respectively, for Illinois redshirt junior defensive end Oluwole Betiku, with the former statistic leading the Big Ten and the latter checking in second. Betiku's tackles for loss total is tied for the fourth most in college football, while his sacks mark is tied for the third most.

20.69 Yards per catch for U-M junior wideout Nico Collins this season, which is the fourth-highest average in the Big Ten. The junior's 63-yard performance on Saturday gave him 269 yards for the season, which overtook sophomore receiver Ronnie Bell's 263 for the team lead.

56 Degrees for a projected high on Saturday in Champaign, with a zero percent chance of precipitation and nothing but sunny skies. It will be breezy, however, with maximum wind gusts expected to hit 15 miles-per-hour.

70 All-time wins for U-M against Illinois, which are tied with Michigan State for the Wolverines' most against a single opponent. The only club the Maize and Blue has ever defeated more times than the Fighting Illini and the Spartans is Minnesota, at 75.

2011 Was the last time Michigan played in Champaign, with the Wolverines picking up a 31-14 victory in Brady Hoke's first season. The Maize and Blue have played at all 12 of the other opposing Big Ten venues since their last trip to Illinois.

Updates On Every Former Michigan Wolverine In The NFL: Week Five

Ryan Tice • TheWolverine

Week five featured a sack party for former Michigan football defensive linemen, and of course Tom Brady threw for 300-plus yards and three touchdowns in a win — but that seems to be the norm for him, even at age 42.

Philadelphia Eagles defensive end Brandon Graham was the headliner. He entered Sunday with zero quarterback sacks on the year and his wife was in the hospital (she was scheduled to have gallbladder surgery Monday), but she reportedly told him while talking to him via phone that he “better have a good game.”

How about the best game of his career?

Graham notched a career-high three sacks and led the way for an astounding 10 team sacks in the 31-6 beatdown of the Jets. Not only that, the versatile defensive linemen (who slid inside on a few plays and was quite effective there, tallying two of

his sacks) tied for the team lead with six total tackles and paced the Eagles with five quarterback hits.

It was Graham's first multi-sack game since the 2017 season opener, while he also played a crucial role in a Philly pick-six (see video below with his capsule). He was even included on Pro Football Focus' Team of the Week, posting a grade of 88.6 thanks to three sacks, two quarterback hits and two hurries on just 21 pass rushes.

Graham became the first Eagle with three sacks in a game since teammate Fletcher Cox last December, while he moved into sixth place on the Eagle's all-time sacks list (45.5).

Elsewhere, Oakland Raiders defensive tackle Maurice Hurst racked up a pair of sacks, including one on the final play of the game that sealed a victory, and New England Patriots rookie Chase Winovich added one of his own, making it four straight weeks with at least an assisted sack for the rookie.

A full breakdown of how former Wolverines did in the NFL is below:

OG Ben Braden, Green Bay Packers

Spent the first week with the New York Jets on their practice squad, but was released and quickly picked up by the 4-1 Packers for their practice squad, where he still resides.

QB Tom Brady, New England Patriots

Kept the 5-0 Patriots unbeaten with a 33-7 win at Washington ... Completed 28 of 42 throws (66.7 percent) for 348 yards with three touchdowns and one interception for a passer rating of 106.1 ... On the season, he has completed 63.1 percent of his throws for 1,409 yards with 10 touchdowns and two picks ... Holds a quarterback rating of 99.4, which is ranked 12th in the league among qualified passers ... Is tied for seventh in passing yards.

TE Ian Bunting, Free Agent

After being released by the Jets, received a tryout for at least the Saints but is still unsigned at this time.

LB Devin Bush Jr., Pittsburgh Steelers

Started in the 1-4 Steelers' 26-23 loss to the Ravens and notched eight tackles (five solo) with his first NFL interception ... He tied for second on Pittsburgh in tackles and was in for 91 percent of his team's defensive snaps, in addition to six special teams plays ... Through five appearances and four starts, he has 45 tackles (28 solo) with one sack, two passes broken up, an interception and three fumble recoveries ... His tackle total is tied for seventh in the league, while he is tied for 12th in solo takedowns ... He is also tied for the NFL lead in fumble recoveries ... No rookie has more total tackles or solo stops, and he leads all first-year players by seven in the former and three in the latter.

TE Jake Butt, Denver Broncos

On injured reserve with the 1-4 Broncos after what he called on Twitter a "minor scope" to his knee.

DE Taco Charlton, Miami Dolphins

After being released by Dallas and then recording a sack in two straight weeks with his new club, Charlton and the 0-4 Dolphins were off this past week ... He has started in one of his two appearances and logged eight total stops with two quarterback take-downs.

WR Jehu Chesson, Washington Redskins

Is on 0-5 Washington's practice squad.

DE Frank Clark, Kansas City Chiefs

Started and notched a pair of stops, including one for loss, in the 4-1 Chiefs' 19-13 loss to the Colts ... Was in for 83 percent of his team's defensive snaps ... Has started all five games and totaled 11 tackles with one sack and an interception.

C/G Mason Cole, Arizona Cardinals

Played eight special teams snaps in the 1-3-1 Cardinals' 26-23 win over the Bengals ... Has appeared as a reserve in all five games.

WR Devin Funchess, Indianapolis Colts

Started for the 3-2 Colts and broke his collarbone in week one, after hauling in three passes for 32 yards, and is now on injured reserve.

LB Rashaan Gary, Green Bay Packers

Logged 22 defensive snaps (31 percent) and some special teams action en route to three tackles in the 4-1 Packers' 34-24 win over the Cowboys ... Has seen action in five games off the bench, and posted eight tackles with a sack and one fumble recovery.

LB Ben Gedeon, Minnesota Vikings

Came off the bench to total a pair of stops in the 3-2 Vikings' 28-10 win over the Giants ... Left the game with a concussion ... Has started twice and appeared in five games this year while totaling eight stops.

TE Zach Gentry, Pittsburgh Steelers

After playing in two straight games, he went back to being inactive ... Has seen time in two contests for the 1-4 Steelers, but has not recorded any statistics outside of a fumble recovery.

OL Graham Glasgow, Detroit Lions

The 2-1-1 Lions and their starting right guard were off this past week ... He has opened all four games so far.

DT Ryan Glasgow, Cincinnati Bengals

After being inactive the last two weeks with a thigh injury, he returned to the lineup

and notched four tackles off the bench ... That was one stop short of his career best ... Was in for 22 snaps on defense (29 percent) and also 14 special teams plays ... Has appeared in three games with two starts and totaled six tackles.

DE Brandon Graham, Philadelphia Eagles

Started and set a career high with three sacks while he tied for the team lead with six tackles in the 3-2 Eagles' 31-6 win over the Jets ... He registered a total of five hits on the quarterback ... Has started all five games so far this year, and notched 16 stops with three sacks and a fumble recovery.

QB Chad Henne, Kansas City Chiefs

On injured reserve for the 4-1 Chiefs after breaking his ankle in the preseason.

RB Karan Higdon, Houston Texans

Is on the 3-2 Texans' practice squad.

S Lano Hill, Seattle Seahawks

Played on special teams only in the 4-1 Seahawks' 30-29 win over the Rams and did not record any statistics ... Has appeared in all five games (two starts) and notched six tackles.

DT Maurice Hurst, Oakland Raiders

Came off the bench to play in half of his team's defensive snaps and tally a pair of quarterback takedowns ... Those marked his first sacks of the year and set a single-game career high ... The final sack sealed the 24-21 win over the Bears ... However, he also was flagged for (a questionable) roughing the passer which negated an interception ... He has started twice and played in all five games this year while making 10 stops with two sacks and breaking up one pass.

FB Joe Kerridge, Cleveland Browns

On injured reserve with the 2-3 Browns.

OT Taylor Lewan, Tennessee Titans

Returned from a four-game suspension to start at left tackle and play every snap in a 14-7 loss to the Bills ... Has started once for the 2-3 Titans.

CB Jourdan Lewis, Dallas Cowboys

Played on special teams only and logged a tackle in the 3-2 Cowboys' 34-24 loss to the Packers ... Has five tackles and one pass broken up in five games played this year.

CB David Long, Los Angeles Rams

After being activated for the first time (but not playing) last week, he returned to being inactive for the 3-2 Rams 30-29 loss to the Seahawks.

OL Erik Magnuson, Buffalo Bills

Currently resides on the 4-1 Bills' practice squad.

DT Bryan Mone, Seattle Seahawks

Played in the first three games and notched a trio of tackles for the 4-1 Seahawks, but was waived and signed back to the team's practice squad.

OL Patrick Omameh, New Orleans Saints

Played five special teams snaps in the 4-1 Saints' 31-24 win over the Buccaneers ... Has appeared off the bench in three games this year.

S Jabrill Peppers, New York Giants

Started at strong safety and racked up five stops with one tackle for loss and a forced fumble in the 2-3 Giants' 28-10 loss to the Vikings ... Was in for 69 defensive snaps (97 percent) ... On the year, he has posted 30 tackles (21 solo) and three passes bro-

ken up with one interception (a pick-six) and a forced fumble ... Is tied for 31st in the league for passes defensed (breakups and interceptions).

QB Jake Rudock, Miami Dolphins

Is on the 0-4 Dolphins' practice squad.

LB Jake Ryan, Jacksonville Jaguars

On the reserve/non-football injury list for the 2-3 Jaguars after suffering an off-season setback during his rehab from a torn ACL.

OL Michael Schofield, Los Angeles Chargers

Started at right guard and played every offensive snap in the 2-3 Chargers' 20-13 loss to the Broncos ... Has not missed a snap yet this year while starting all five contests.

CB Brandon Watson, Jacksonville Jaguars

The undrafted rookie is on the 2-3 Jaguars' practice squad.

S Jarrod Wilson, Jacksonville Jaguars

Started at free safety in the 2-3 Jags' 34-27 loss to the Panthers and notched four tackles (one for loss) ... Played every defensive snap ... Has started each game so far and racked up 29 tackles (19 solo) with one pass broken up.

DE Chase Winovich, New England Patriots

Was in for just 17 defensive snaps (29 percent), but made them count, finishing with two tackles and another sack in the 5-0 Patriots' 33-7 win over the Redskins ... It marked the fourth straight week he has at least assisted on a quarterback takedown ... Also played on special teams ... In five appearances as a reserve, he has logged seven stops with four sacks ... Despite limited snaps, he is tied for 13th in the NFL and leads all rookies in quarterback takedowns.

DE Chris Wormley, Baltimore Ravens

Came off the bench and notched a tackle in 3-2 Baltimore's 26-23 overtime win versus the Steelers ... Has started twice and appeared in every contest so far this year and notched two tackles.

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Don Brown Talks Wisconsin To Iowa Improvement, Glasgow On Goal Line, More

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

Michigan defensive coordinator Don Brown took some heat for his group's performance at Wisconsin, a 35-14 loss that could have been even worse. The Wolverines struggled with their run fits and got punched in the mouth, but they punched back several weeks later when Iowa tried some of the same stuff.

U-M held the Hawkeyes to one total yard rushing with the aid of eight sacks and made quarterback Nate Stanley's life miserable.

"Obviously when you're playing Wisconsin, Jonathan Taylor's a big difference," Brown said of the Badgers' star back. "I think he's a very, very good player. We got off to a bad start on the road, made some uncharacteristic fits in the run game, and it hurt us.

"Everybody in the outside world in those scenarios questions you. We felt like we've just got to go to work and clean up our run fits. I'm not making any excuses, but it was our fourth different offense in four weeks. It has been challenging."

Part of their upswing involves facing similar types of plays on a game-to-game basis the last few weeks, the coach added, noting that familiarity gives them a chance to defend better. They see the plays, the footwork of the running back, the blocks up front rather than run and shoot one week, triple option the next, followed by a smash-mouth attack like the first few games.

Getting interior lineman and redshirt junior Michael Dwumfour back helped, too, Brown added. Redshirt sophomore Donovan Jeter struggled on the interior against the Badgers and is still working on his game.

"Mike had a really good game. He texted me the other day, 'Coach, I jumped some gaps. It won't happen again,'" Brown said. "The thing Mike brings to the table is the ability to come out of his stance 100 miles an hour. He creates a ping-pong effect in the backfield because he can knock off pullers; he's athletic.

"For him, he hasn't played a whole heck of a lot of football lately around here."

Another week of practice will help Dwumfour with his footwork, the game plan, his fundamentals and everything else.

"He's benefiting, and we're benefiting, from his solid play," Brown said. "His athletic ability ... someone posted him running a slant route this summer — and I did crack a smile when I saw it."

Dwumfour is just getting back to 100 percent after missing parts of last year and early this season. He's getting his conditioning back and is ready to play more.

"More activity in the throw game," Brown said when asked what to expect. "Those snaps in the pass game, when we're in some of our package stuff, can really exhaust

you because it's, 'on your mark, get set, go.'

"I think you'll see him more as we move forward. His conditioning level will raise, and you'll see him more in those scenarios."

Is A Fifth Year Possible For Michigan Senior DT Carlo Kemp?

Senior nose tackle Carlo Kemp is playing at a high level. Some have wondered openly if Kemp will be back for a fifth year, having played in only one game as a freshman (before the more recent four-game rule started).

"I hope so. We don't discuss those things ... the man upstairs [head coach Jim Harbaugh] will when the time comes," Brown said. "We joke all the time ... he came here when I came, and he was a Mike linebacker. Oh, my God. That wasn't going to work. So we moved him to defensive end.

"He went from open-side end to closed-side end to three tech tackle, and he became the nose. He made the complete migration all the way to nose. Now he's 290 pounds."

One of his plays on Saturday stood out, Brown said. Iowa ran isolation to linebacker Jordan Glasgow, and Kemp's job was to fit the fullback inside and give room to the safety Josh Metellus.

"He's getting doubled, then you see his head stick through, and then all of a sudden he comes out of there and he's involved in the tackle," Brown marveled. "That doesn't happen every day. That's 600 pounds of human flesh that he split and makes the play."

Fifth-Year Senior LB Jordan Glasgow At The Goal Line

Brown took heat from many people on his goal-line defense at Wisconsin when he put Glasgow, the former walk-on and safety, over a guard. As many should have assumed, there was more to the defense.

"I don't want to really get into schematics, but I can promise you this — we had all the gaps covered," he said. "It was depending on whether the quarterback was under center or in the gun. That's as far as I'll take it, but I can assure you, somebody was going to fit the 'A' gap.

"It was a half-short yardage, half-blitz fit based on things that happen in the backfield. I've run it about 60 times in maybe the last four or five years and had zero-to-negative-yardage plays in that scenario 60 percent of the time."

They've gone back to it with success, he added.

"I appreciate people critiquing my stuff, but live and learn, too," he said. "Adjust as we do."

Salt 'N Pepper's Here

Defensive ends Kwity Paye and Aidan Hutchinson dominated Saturday, and either could have won Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week honors. Hutchinson did (and was Pro Football Focus' top-graded player in the game), while Paye went out with an

injury. He's day to day, Brown said, but is expected to be okay.

The duo call themselves 'Salt and Pepper.'

"Salt and Pepper, huh?" Brown laughed. "Adian Hutchinson, I'm looking at this guy and I'm going, 'He's going to be a little stiff, going to be this, going to be that. He's just so big.'

"He does not have one ounce of stiffness. He's very flexible, extremely strong and is an elite athlete. I can't think of anybody his size that is more flexible than he is. ... He is unbelievable.

"Kwity has come a long way since he was at [Boston College] camp as a freshman at 217 pounds."

Paye has become an elite run stopper against the spread, Brown added.

"Recently, we were talking about defending the spread run, the quarterback runs, the pulls, all the stuff we see in college football. He's the best spread run defender I've ever seen," he said.

"Why do I say that? Cause you can't fool him. Zone read, close out the zone, chase the quarterback from the inside out. Check mark. Bluff, now that puller comes back and instead of trying to kick, you out, he bypasses you. Brakes go on, chase the quarterback from the inside out. Check mark.

"He can do all those things like that. It's uncanny. We're blessed here with those two guys, and this [graduate transfer defensive end] Michael Danna is a close second."

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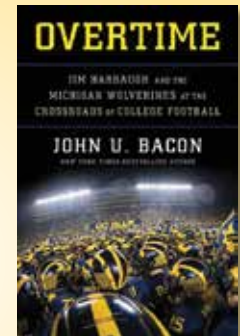
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