

OCT. 5, 2019 ♦ MICHIGAN VS. IOWA

Game Info

Site: Michigan Stadium (107,601)

Kickoff: 12:00 p.m.

Television: FOX

Radio: Michigan/IMG Radio Network (950 AM in the Detroit Area; SiriusXM channel 195) with Dan Dierdorf, Jim Brandstatter and sideline reporter Doug Karsch, a regular contributor to TheWolverine.com.

Series Facts: Saturday represents Michigan's Homecoming game, the Wolverines are 20-4 in their last 24 such contests, including a 4-0 mark under Jim Harbaugh ... U-M leads the all-time series with Iowa 41-15-4, but the Hawkeyes have won six of the last 10 in the Big Ten rivalry ... Michigan enters ranked No. 19 in the Associated Press poll and No. 18 by the coaches, while Iowa checks in at No. 14 in both top 25s ... U-M is 3-4-1 at home when both squads are ranked, and holds a 23-5-3 all-time advantage against the school at Michigan Stadium.

Previewing Iowa With A Hawkeye Insider

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

Tom Kakert of Hawkeye Report was kind enough to swing by TheWolverine this week and break down Iowa's football team prior to its massive showdown at Michigan this weekend.

Kakert analyzed the club's strengths and weaknesses, while also revealing how he thinks the contest will play out on Saturday.

PROJECTED IOWA FOOTBALL STARTERS ON OFFENSE

• **Senior QB Nate Stanley** — After throwing for 2,852 yards and 26 touchdowns last season, Stanley is once again off to a hot start in 2019, compiling 965 yards and eight scoring tosses with no interceptions. He is also completing 64.4 percent of his passes, and is just one of two starting quarterbacks in the Big Ten yet to throw an interception this season (Ohio State sophomore Justin Fields being the other).

• **Senior FB Brady Ross** — He is used more as a blocker than a ball carrier, with just four attempts for three yards and a touchdown on the season. Ross is still a significant part of the offense despite his limited carries, playing at least 24 snaps in three of the Hawkeyes' first four games.

• **Redshirt junior RB Mekhi Sargent** — He is the top statistical back for an offense that has divided up its carries significantly (three different rushers with at least 33 attempts), leading the team in totes (54), rushing yards (299) and ground touchdowns (two). Sargent has rushed for at least 58 yards in all four of Iowa's contests, and has averaged at least 4.5 yards per carry in each of those outings.

• **Junior WR Brandon Smith** — He is tied with junior wideout Ihmir Smith-Marsette for the team lead in catches (15) and receiving touchdowns (three), but ranks second in receiving yards (170). Smith's two best outings of the year have come in each of the past two weeks, when he hauled in 51 yards at Iowa State Sept. 14 and 71 last Saturday in a 48-3 win over Middle Tennessee State.

• **Junior WR Ihmir Smith-Marsette** — His 16.9 yards per catch are the second highest on the team, trailing only redshirt freshman wideout Tyrone Tracy's 20.5. Smith-Marsette has been Stanley's most consistent target this season, reeling in at least four receptions in three of Iowa's four games.

• **Fifth-year senior TE Nate Wieting** — He has served as the squad's primary tight end following the early departures of Noah Fant and T.J. Hockensen, who were both top-20 picks, but has only caught two passes for 10 yards. Redshirt junior Shaun Beyer has seen less time than Wieting this year (123 snaps to Wieting's 238), but has been a bit more of a receiving option with four grabs for 57 yards.

• **Redshirt junior LT Alaric Jackson** — He has only played in one game so far — the season-opening win over Miami (Ohio) — due to injury, with junior Tristan Wirfs having manned the left tackle spot in his absence. Though it's not official yet, Kakert revealed that Jackson is "expected back this week."

• **Fifth-year senior LG Landan Paulsen** — He has been outstanding in his first season as a starter according to Pro Football Focus (PFF), checking in with an overall grade of 71.2 on the year (64 is considered average). Paulsen has also been incredibly durable in 2019, with his 230 snaps ranking fifth most of any Hawkeye offensive player.

• **Redshirt freshman C Tyler Linderbaum** — Like Paulsen, Linderbaum is also a first-year starter and has actually been tabbed by PFF as Iowa's second-best player on the entire offense (84.4 grade). His 280 snaps are the most on offense, and his 89.0 pass blocking mark is the highest on the team.

• **Redshirt junior RG Cole Banwart** — Kakert revealed that fifth-year senior Levi Paulsen could also start in this spot on Saturday, though Paulsen has been manning the right tackle job while Wirfs has slid over to left tackle in Jackson's absence. Paulsen has graded out significantly higher than Banwart on the year, with the former having earned a 71.1 mark from PFF and the latter a 64.8.

• **Junior RT Tristan Wirfs** — He will start at either left or right tackle on Saturday (depending on whether or not Jackson returns), and has been rated by PFF as Iowa's best offensive player (89.3). Wirfs has also been tabbed as the Hawkeyes' top run blocker on the season (86.9).

PROJECTED IOWA FOOTBALL STARTERS ON DEFENSE

• **Junior DE A.J. Epenesa** — Though he is widely viewed as one of the best defensive ends in the nation, Epenesa has only racked up one sack and one tackle for loss in 2019. His five quarterback hurries are three more than any other Hawkeye, however, and his 77.8 PFF grade is the third best on the club's defense.

• **Redshirt junior DT Austin Schulte** — He has gone from never having appeared in a game to becoming a significant contributor along the defensive line. Last week's Middle Tennessee State contest was Schulte's first career start, though Kakert said it would not be surprising if redshirt sophomore Daviyon Nixon earned the start in this spot either.

• **Senior DT Cedrick Lattimore** — PFF has pegged him as Iowa's second-best defensive performer this season, awarding him with an overall mark of 78.3. Like Epenesa, Lattimore's worth hasn't necessarily shown up in the box score, with the senior having compiled just one sack, one tackle for loss and seven total stops.

• **Redshirt junior DE Chauncey Gholston** — His 181 snaps are second among defensive linemen only to Epenesa's 186, though he is still searching for his first quarterback takedown and tackle for loss. Gholston has, however, played an important role in Iowa's rush defense ranking 10th nationally (77.0 yards per game allowed).

• **Senior LB Kristian Welch** — His 31 tackles lead the club and are eight more than any other Hawkeye, while his two stops behind the line of scrimmage rank second. Welch's 193 snaps played this year are tied for the second most on the team's defense, and are only one behind junior safety Geno Stone's 194 for the club lead.

• **Redshirt junior LB Nick Niemann** — His 67.3 mark from PFF is the highest of Iowa's three starting linebackers, as is his 73.7 grade against the run. The veteran has struggled mightily as a tackler, however, with his 45.7 tally checking in 23rd out of the 27 Hawkeyes who have attempted a tackle in 2019.

• **Redshirt sophomore LB Djimon Colbert** — His 23 stops are the second most on the team and his 1.5 tackles for loss rank third. Like Niemann, Colbert has also struggled as a tackler this season, accumulating a subpar 53.3 mark in that department from PFF.

• **Fifth-year senior CB Michael Ojemudia** — If his last name looks familiar, it's because he's the younger brother of former Michigan defensive end Mario Ojemudia (2012-15). The fifth-year senior's two interceptions are the most on Iowa's roster in 2019, while his 15 tackles are tied for fourth most.

• **Redshirt freshman CB D.J. Johnson** — Injuries to arguably the Hawkeyes' top three cornerbacks — junior Matt Hankins, and sophomores Julius Brents and Riley Moss — have ransacked the position, thrusting Johnson into a starting role as a result. The youngster has struggled in his first extensive game action, with PFF handing him a subpar grade of 62.6.

• **Junior S Geno Stone** — He is the most experienced Hawkeye player in the secondary, and is leading the entire defense in snaps played this season (194). Stone's 16 tackles are the third most on the club, though his 62.5 PFF coverage grade is obviously below average.

• **Redshirt sophomore S Jack Koerner** — He has been filling in for sophomore Kaevon Merriweather, who was injured in the season opener and hasn't played since. Kakert noted that Merriweather could return this week, though Koerner has tied for the team lead with two pass breakups in his absence.

PROJECTED IOWA FOOTBALL STARTERS ON SPECIAL TEAMS

• **Redshirt junior K Keith Duncan** — He made the game-winning kick in Iowa's 14-13 upset victory over Michigan in 2016, before not seeing action the following two years. Duncan has returned with a bang, however, and connected on 10 of 11 field goal attempts this season, with a long of 49.

• **Fifth-year senior P Michael Sleep-Dalton** — He transferred in from Arizona State in the offseason and has been outstanding in his first campaign in Iowa City, averaging 45.46 yards per punt. Sleep-Dalton doesn't have enough attempts to qualify for the national punting statistics (players need 3.6 punts per games played, while he is tallying 3.25), but if he did, his clip would rank as the second best mark in the Big Ten.

Iowa Football's Biggest Offensive Strength

"Iowa is coming off the best overall offensive performance of the [head coach Kirk] Ferentz era," Kakert noted of their last outing versus Middle Tennessee State. "The Hawkeyes piled up 644 yards of total offense, including 351 yards rushing. The strength of the offense really starts up front with the offensive line. Alaric Jackson is expected back at left tackle this week and that means the offensive line will be at full strength.

"The run game has been very solid this year. They are led by Mekhi Sargent, but Iowa will play [redshirt sophomore] Toren Young, [junior] Ivory Kelly-Martin and probably [freshman] Tyler Goodson in the game.

"One of the surprises this year has been the passing game. Nate Stanley has been very good so far this year with a completion percentage approaching 65 percent, and he has eight touchdown passes and zero interceptions.

"Wide receiver has not been a strength for the Iowa program under Ferentz, but this is probably the strongest group he has had. Ihmir Smith-Marsette is in the early stages of kind of a breakout season and Brandon Smith, Tyrone Tracy and [redshirt freshman] Nico Ragaini have been very good.

"[Redshirt sophomore and Michigan transfer] Oliver Martin has seen limited duty so far."

Iowa Football's Biggest Offensive Weakness

"If there's a weakness this year from a positional standpoint, it's probably tight end," the analyst opined. "After losing two tight ends to the NFL as first-round picks, Iowa's tight ends haven't been very active in Iowa's offense so far this year."

This is obviously a substantial change from past Ferentz squads, particularly last year's when T.J. Hockensen reeled in 760 yards and Noah Fant 519, to go along with a combined 13 touchdowns between the two of them.

Wieting and Beyer have only compiled a combined 67 receiving yards following the aforementioned duo's early departures to the NFL, and have taken on a minimal role in the passing game.

The tandem has found other ways to serve the team, however, with PFF awarding Wieting with a 71.3 run blocking grade and Beyer with a 71.4 mark as a pass blocker.

Iowa Football's Biggest Defensive Strength

"The numbers that are being put up by the Iowa defense are very good," Kakert said. "They are allowing 8.5 points per game in the first four games, and no opponent has rushed for over 100 yards in a game."

Iowa's defense was lights out last year (finished seventh nationally), and it has picked up in 2019 right where it left off. The club is third in the country in scoring defense, fifth in total defense (251.0 yards allowed per game), 10th against the run (77.0) and 19th versus the pass (174.0) so far this year.

The Hawkeyes have also held three of their four opponents to 245 yards or fewer, with Iowa State's 418 total being the lone exception.

On top of all that, Iowa and Georgia are the only two remaining squads in all of college football who have yet to allow a rushing touchdown this season.

Iowa Football's Biggest Defensive Weakness

"It's really hard to argue that the defense, while lacking a 'wow' factor to it, has been solid," the insider said. "But if there's a weakness it's that they haven't been tested. Iowa State was their best opponent and that was just an odd game with two weather-related delays.

"A deeper dive into the stats show that Iowa has only five sacks in four games. Last year they had 35. Iowa only has three interceptions this year. Last year they had 20.

"Right now the defense feels like it's okay, but untested and some feeling that, while they have good numbers, they haven't been fully tested."

Iowa's inability to get into opposing backfields has been one of the most baffling statistics surrounding its defense this year, with the club's 11 tackles for loss ranking as the fewest of all 130 Football Subdivision (FBS) teams in the nation.

The Hawkeyes haven't been much better in the sack department either, with their five quarterback takedowns ranking 113th in the FBS.

KAKERT'S FINAL SCORE PREDICTION

"Before the season I put out my game-by-game predictions and picked a loss for the Hawkeyes," Kakert recalled. "It just felt like a tough spot for the Hawkeyes. None of the players on this team have played in The Big House and it's the first conference road test.

"Plus, Michigan is the more talented team. However, Iowa has looked a little better than

I expected, and I think Michigan hasn't looked as strong as I thought they would be this year.

"I don't like to flip my game picks unless I have a good reason, like a key injury, and at this point I am potentially going to do that. Iowa is a lot like Wisconsin, in terms of their approach and it's hard to ignore what happened to Michigan a couple of weeks ago.

"There's also turnovers. Iowa has one this year and Michigan has had a lot of them. I'll go with Iowa, but my confidence level isn't all that strong."

Iowa 24, Michigan 21

Keys To The Game: Michigan Wolverines Football vs. Iowa

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

Michigan has arrived at another fork in the road in its season with a tough Iowa team coming to town Saturday. The Wolverines used their mulligan in a blowout loss at Wisconsin, and now they get Badgers-lite in a Hawkeyes team that's stout on both sides of the ball.

Iowa is always one of the most physical teams on the schedule, well-disciplined and prideful in its line play. Head coach Kirk Ferentz is the dean of Big Ten coaches, and his program has an identity.

Regardless, U-M is favored to win in Ann Arbor, where head coach Jim Harbaugh has only lost four games.

"They're one of the premier football programs in the history of the college football," Ferentz said this week in praising Michigan. "They've been good for a long time, and when you look at them, typically they're very talented. That's certainly the case with this group. Pretty much at every position they have good skill, good talent and good ability. That has been pretty consistent."

"Pretty much" meaning there are a few chinks in the armor, particularly a lack of depth on the defensive line.

The Hawkeyes have won five of the last six (the asterisk — four of those came against Rich Rodriguez- and Brady Hoke-coached teams) against Michigan. They've also won on their last two visits to Michigan Stadium as the Homecoming opponent, blowing U-M out

34-9 in 2002 and taking down the Wolverines 38-28 in 2010. This Saturday's game is also a homecoming tilt.

History doesn't mean anything when it comes to this year, either, and this is a watershed moment for the Wolverines. Win and their dreams of a Big Ten Championship remain alive for at least a few more weeks. Lose, and the message boards become an absolute disaster.

Here's what Harbaugh's crew has to do Saturday to help ensure that doesn't happen:

Get the Hawkeyes into second- and third-and-long: Iowa ranks 29th nationally and fourth in the Big Ten in rushing, averaging 217.5 yards per game on the ground, and you know their men up front are salivating after seeing Wisconsin put up 350-plus rushing yards on U-M a few weeks ago. Such success usually correlates to a good third-down percentage, and that's the case here — the Hawkeyes are tied for 17th nationally at 50 percent on the money down.

The Wolverines have to get Iowa into third-and-long situations and take advantage of their speed on the edges against an Iowa line that's solid, but not elite in sacks allowed (tied for 39th nationally, with 1.5 surrendered per game), mostly against poor to mediocre competition. If not, U-M will be play-actioned and tight-ended to a slow death. Tony Moeaki, TJ Hockenson ... heck, we can go back to Dallas Clark in the early 2000s. We remember them all.

A good, mistake-free game from Shea Patterson: Michigan has rarely run the ball consistently against good, physical fronts over the last several years. The Wolverines were able to accomplish it against Michigan State in East Lansing last season, racking up 183 yards against the Spartans (144 coming from running back Karan Higdon) — but that's been the exception, not the rule.

Iowa ranks 10th nationally in rushing defense (77.0 yards allowed per game) and hasn't given up a single touchdown on the ground this season. The Wolverines are going to need to throw the ball well in order to win, and that means good decision making, too, from U-M's senior quarterback.

"I thought Shea played his best all year long [against Rutgers]," offensive coordinator Josh Gattis said on 97.1 The Ticket Radio this week. "That was the Shea that I had seen all camp and all spring. He's just a phenomenal leader for us on offense and really accurate with his decisions and his ball placement. He had a few throws that kind of got away from him that he probably regrets, but he was on point."

It's a group effort, the assistant noted. Running backs need to be better in pass protection, the line needs to be more consistent and Patterson needs to hit open receivers.

"You look at the first few weeks, we probably missed about eight deep shots that were just off the fingertips with multiple players, so it's everybody," Gattis said. "It's not just one person. It's speed of route, it's detail of route, it's releases. Those little things can create a difference."

All of those aspects are going to need to be on point Saturday ... and no turnovers.

Win the battle for "hidden" yardage: Michigan's special teams coverage units have been excellent this year, but two of its biggest returns — a long kick return from freshman Giles Jackson and a 20-yard punt scamper by junior Donovan Peoples-Jones — were called back by penalty (though the latter was a bogus block in the back call).

In tight games as this one is expected to be, the difference can be short fields vs. long fields. That means no mistakes on special teams Saturday and a good game from punter Will Hart. He's going to get some work against the Hawkeyes, and the Wolverines need his best.

The Breakdown — Iowa at Michigan: This was one of the games we looked at before the season and thought, 'might be a tricky one.' Physical football teams that don't take plays off have been tough for U-M to manage in the trenches over the last several years, and Iowa fits that description.

The Hawkeyes have a good, veteran quarterback in Noah Stanley, a stingy defense, physical lines and enough talent at the skill positions to keep a defense off balance. They rely on wide receivers more than tight ends this year, but they've got two averaging 16.9 yards or more per reception ... they are capable.

This one will likely be a dogfight.

News & Views: Jim Harbaugh On Iowa, Charbonnet, Gattis & More

Chris Balas • The Wolverine

Our thoughts on Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh's comments heading into Saturday's game against Iowa, in News & Views format:

NEWS: Michigan plays Iowa Saturday in Ann Arbor with a chance to improve to 2-1 in conference play following a 52-0 win over Rutgers.

HARBAUGH: "If you can play two really good games in a row, it will be a trend in my mind. Three or more will become a habit, so we're trying to cement that as a goal for us and that's where we want to be.

"Iowa is consistently good and has been for many years. One of the things that strikes you the most about them is that they're consistently really good at all three phases. Good in experience, and good at consistency."

VIEWES: They're Wisconsin-lite in that they'll come out swinging and try to punch you in the mouth, finish their blocks and are fundamentally sound in what they do on both sides of the ball.

Michigan, meanwhile, is still in search of an identity. The Wolverines probably have better skill position players and are every bit as experienced as anyone up front on offense, but the switch to a new offense and an inability to protect the ball have made them look like an undisciplined bunch.

If U-M can't run the ball on Iowa Saturday — and we wouldn't bet on it — this is going to be a tough, tough game to win.

NEWS: Senior defensive tackle Carlo Kemp's roots have made him one of U-M's most valuable defenders.

HARBAUGH: "The Pagano family ... Carlo has had that, and his brothers have had that for their whole lives. How valuable is that? I don't exactly know. [But] he's doing a tremendous job. One of the real staunch leaders on the team and his play, and the effort he gives in each game, he knows. He was taught that."

VIEWES: Kemp is better as a complement than as "the guy" in the middle, and there are matchups that have been difficult for him. He and redshirt junior Mike Dwumfour, however, can hold up quite well together — we saw Dwumfour's motor against Rutgers (noting "it's only Rutgers"), and Kemp's is off the charts.

Review any game this year and you'll find a guy who is Terminator-like in his determination, shoots the gaps sometimes as quickly as Maurice Hurst used to (though his is more anticipation than quick first step) and plays hard on each and every snap. It's going to take more like him for this defense to get where it wants to be, but he's a more than worthy captain.

NEWS: Offensive coordinator Josh Gattis was on the sidelines rather than in the press box calling plays Saturday.

HARBAUGH: "Really well — I'm really excited about it. We get along great. He's an easy person to get along great with, and he's a really hard-working coach.

"He's a ball guy. We've all meshed and jelled well as a professional relationship and, a personal note, I think he's a great guy ... fun to be around, all the good things. A lot of personality. I feel the same way about each and every one of our coaches."

VIEWES: The players fed off his enthusiasm, and it was noticeable. Gattis spent a lot of time teaching after plays — and, for 'The Office' fans, as long as this isn't a Jim Halpert and Michael Scott co-manager situation in which Harbaugh has a hard time letting go, this could work really well.

Substitutions were better. Communication was better, and plays got in more quickly. Granted, it was Rutgers, but there was a lot to like about the way the offense operated Saturday. It was just more efficient.

NEWS: Freshman defensive tackle Chris Hinton got some reps in mop-up duty against Rutgers, but he and fellow freshman defensive tackle Mazi Smith have not been in when it mattered.

HARBAUGH: "First, Mazi looks really good. Just what he's done with his physique in the last nine months. ... I talked to him this morning during our morning practice and he looked great.

"Chris Hinton has been getting in there quite a bit, playing on special teams. I think they're both kind of on the precipice of breaking through."

VIEWES: 'Why haven't they played more' has been the fan base's rallying cry, but Kemp talked about that Monday morning. Neither one of them looks like an 18-year-old, Kemp said, and he marveled at the way they were coming along.

At the same time, he noted, there are still several areas in which they need to improve — "little things," he said, that have prevented them from making an impact like every single one of the outstanding tackles who ever played at Michigan.

They'll get there. When they do, what's now a perceived weakness will be a strength. The Wolverines still need to add depth here, though. It takes more than two.

NEWS: Freshman running back Zach Charbonnet carried only five times against Rutgers, which went for 24 yards.

HARBAUGH: "He looks good. When I watch him move, he looks good. He looks good moving and he looks good running. I thought the 33 carries [against Army] were way too many."

VIEWES: Maybe. At the same time, you do what you've got to do to win ball games, and if a guy's not "injured" and can play, you ride him. Guys like Mike Hart and Chris Perry (51 carries in one game) always wanted the ball more, and you need guys like that.

Charbonnet is, hands down, the best running back on this team. He's the only one, in fact, who consistently resembles a good, Big Ten back.

They are going to need him to carry a lot if they're going to win games, starting Saturday. He should welcome that challenge.

Wolverine Watch: A Hammering That Could Help

John Borton • TheWolverine

Michigan's biggest advantage walking into a Homecoming fistfight with Iowa might be its ugly black eye.

That's different than eye black, stuff the Wolverines will load on extra thick when they square off against the No. 14 Hawkeyes. No, this black eye hasn't gone away, despite plenty of concealer, including a 52-0 win over hapless Rutgers.

You get better, or you get worse, Michigan coaches loved to say down through the years. At Wisconsin, it couldn't have gotten much worse.

The Wolverines got clotheslined across the bridge of the nose and embarrassed in the Big Ten opener. They got alternately challenged or mocked on social media, depending upon the whether the commentator involved a disillusioned U-M lover or an ardent hater.

Either way, Jim Harbaugh's team needed to drag itself up off the canvas and make changes, quickly. How well they did so couldn't get definitively proven against the Scarlet Knights, even if the score wound up 110-0.

Iowa's a different story. The Hawkeyes are always rugged, tough, physical and ready to blacken the other eye.

There's one thing Iowa lacks, though, that Michigan possesses. Simply put, it's that slug to the mug.

Kirk Ferentz's crew has played a schedule strikingly similar to Michigan's thus far. The Hawkeyes shut out Rutgers, 30-0, before the Wolverines' 52-0 Ash-canning effort. Iowa also enjoyed a comfortable cruise past Middle Tennessee State, 48-3, while U-M beat the Blue Raiders 40-21 in week one.

Both of Saturday's combatants got pushed to the limit by a non-conference team with some fight — Army in double-overtime for Michigan (24-21), Iowa State in Iowa's harrowing 18-17 win.

The other game, though, could be a difference maker.

Instead of rolling past a Mid-American Conference team — like Iowa did in beating Miami of Ohio on opening day, 38-14 — the Wolverines got their teeth kicked in.

Senior left guard and co-captain Ben Bredeson noted that heading into the Iowa showdown, Wisconsin is the last thing on Michigan's mind.

"The loss against Wisconsin — it happens," he said on Monday. "We did the same thing to them last year. This week, we're going to chip away and focus on Iowa. We're not trying to make a statement for a game that happened two weeks ago."

At the same time, his team carries the scars — and the opportunity for improvement — from that one.

In the modern-day gladiator sport, the Wolverines weren't exactly getting mistaken for Russell Crowe after the Badger bash. So they made changes.

Their head coach challenged them — to be tougher, more physical, more punishing in the trenches. He called for Monday practices, when they typically enjoy a recovery day. He assured that those who played the fiercest in practice would see the field on Saturday.

Harbaugh also brought offensive coordinator Josh Gattis out of the press box and onto the field, where he could be more hands on. Gattis responded with the passion of an offensive lineman at an all-you-can-eat pizza buffet.

After freshman receiver Giles Jackson caught a touchdown pass against Rutgers, Gattis definitely became hands on — not in celebration, but instruction.

"Here's a kid who has just caught his first career touchdown pass," Michigan radio sideline reporter Doug Karsch noted. "Big moment, and Gattis is not about a high five, or a smile or a hug. Gattis is in his face, telling him something."

"... I was told later it was because Giles Jackson rounded off his cut and didn't have a shallow cut. It worked out, but Gattis' point wasn't that it worked out. His point was, that's not how you're supposed to run that route."

"Even if it worked, he wanted to make sure it was run properly moving forward, according to what I was told. Just an interesting little aside, that the result was fine, but the execution wasn't what they want and probably needs to be better against better teams."

The Wolverines got run over by Wisconsin's rushing attack. Rather than marking a dire harbinger of the future, fifth-year senior linebacker Jordan Glasgow insisted it involved tough learning that would pay dividends.

"If another team wants to do it, they're not going to have the same success Wisconsin had, because we're going to fix the problems," Glasgow bluntly asserted.

That will get challenged on Saturday.

Iowa stands in a better spot than Michigan, in both record and ranking. But the Wolverines carry something into the contest the Hawkeyes do not.

That's one nasty punch in the face, with the pain and embarrassment that accompany it. The bruise could render the Wolverines more ready to punch back, seeing clearly out of their remaining good eye.

By The Numbers: U-M Has Enjoyed Plenty Of October Success Under Harbaugh

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

Saturday's showdown with Iowa will be the first October contest of 2019 for the Michigan Wolverines' football team, and if history is any indication this should once again be a very good month for it.

Head coach Jim Harbaugh has posted a 12-3 record during the 10th month of the year during his first four seasons on the job, with four of those 12 victories coming against ranked opponents.

Harbaugh has racked up a better record in September (17-3) during his tenure in Ann Arbor, but an undefeated 4-0 mark this October would come within one win of matching that total.

Here is a closer look at Harbaugh's combined records by month at Michigan:

- *August* — 1-0
- *September* — 17-3
- *October* — 12-3
- *November* — 10-6
- *December* — 0-2
- *January* — 1-1

Harbaugh's clubs often play their best — and most consistent — football of the season in October.

All of Michigan's Games in October Under Harbaugh		
Date	Game	Result
Oct. 3, 2015	@ Maryland	W, 28-0
Oct. 10, 2015	No. 13 Northwestern	W, 38-0
Oct. 17, 2015	No. 7 Michigan State	L, 27-23
Oct. 31, 2015	@ Minnesota	W, 29-26
Oct. 1, 2016	No. 8 Wisconsin	W, 14-7
Oct. 8, 2016	@ Rutgers	W, 78-0
Oct. 22, 2016	Illinois	W, 41-8
Oct. 29, 2016	@ Michigan State	W, 32-23
Oct. 7, 2017	Michigan State	L, 14-10
Oct. 14, 2017	@ Indiana	W, 27-20
Oct. 21, 2017	@ No. 2 Penn State	L, 42-13
Oct. 28, 2017	Rutgers	W, 35-14
Oct. 6, 2018	Maryland	W, 42-21
Oct. 13, 2018	No. 15 Wisconsin	W, 38-13
Oct. 20, 2018	@ No. 24 Michigan State	W, 21-7

The case could even be made that three of Harbaugh's first four teams (2015, 2016 and 2018, with 2017 being the exception) were at their best in each of those respective Octobers, with last year's squad being the perfect example.

U-M won its three games that month by a combined score of 101-41 (including triumphs over ranked Wisconsin and MSU clubs), before tailing off a bit in November with an underwhelming 31-20 victory over Indiana and a 62-39 blowout loss at Ohio State.

The 2016 Michigan crew followed a similar script, stringing together a 4-0 mark in October that included a thrilling 14-7 triumph over a top-10 Wisconsin squad on the first day of the month.

The Wolverines later lost at Iowa, 14-13, in mid-November in a matchup where they were heavily favored, before eventually falling at No. 2 Ohio State, 30-27, in double-over-time two weeks later.

Harbaugh's debut squad of 2015, meanwhile, also kicked off its October with a bang, picking up consecutive shutouts (it actually wound up being three straight, including the end-of-September blanking of BYU over Maryland and No. 13 Northwestern, both of which came in blowout fashion (28-0 against the Terrapins and 38-0 over the Wildcats).

The Maize and Blue also would have picked up an Oct. 17 victory over No. 7 Michigan State if not for Blake O'Neill's infamous dropped punt as time expired that wound up giving the Spartans the victory.

Matching the success of past Octobers will obviously be incredibly difficult in 2019, with the Wolverines currently slated to face three ranked foes before Halloween — No. 14 Iowa on Saturday, No. 12 Penn State Oct. 19 and No. 9 Notre Dame Oct. 26.

BY THE NUMBERS: NO. 14 IOWA AT NO. 19 MICHIGAN

3 Different Iowa running backs have already racked up 200 rushing yards this season, more than any other team in the Big Ten. Redshirt junior Mekhi Sargent leads the way with 299 yards, redshirt junior Toren Young is next with 251 and freshman Tyler Goodson rounds out the list with 202.

3.5 Tackles for loss for junior defensive end Kwity Paye last Saturday against Rutgers, which were the most any defensive lineman had ever registered in one game under Harbaugh. Paye's five stops behind the line of scrimmage on the year now pace the team, while his two sacks are tied for the club lead.

4th Straight noon game for Michigan, with at least three more to come (at Illinois Oct. 12, at Maryland Nov. 2 and vs. Ohio State Nov. 30). In comparison, U-M played just five regular-season noon contests all of last year.

5 Of Iowa's 15 all-time victories against Michigan have come since 2009 alone (2009, 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016). The Wolverines still hold a 41-15-4 all-time edge over the Hawkeyes, but possess just a 1-5 mark in the last six meetings.

5-3 Is U-M's home record against Associated Press top-25 opponents under Harbaugh. The five triumphs were against No. 22 BYU and No. 13 Northwestern in 2015, No. 8 Wisconsin in 2016, and No. 15 Wisconsin and No. 14 Penn State in 2018. The three losses, meanwhile, all occurred to rivals — No. 7 Michigan State in 2015, and to Ohio State clubs ranked No. 8 in both 2015 and 2017.

47.62 Yards per punt for redshirt junior Will Hart this season. The veteran doesn't qualify in the national punting statistics yet (punters must average 3.6 attempts per game played, while Hart is averaging 3.2). However, if he did, his average of 47.62 yards per kick would rank as the second-best mark in the Big Ten and seventh in the country.

60 Degrees for a projected high on Saturday in Ann Arbor, with mostly cloudy skies and only a 10 percent chance of precipitation. Wind gusts should also be at a minimum, with maximum speeds only expected to reach 11 miles-per-hour.

81.6 Receiving yards per game for sophomore wideout Ronnie Bell over the team's last three contests, including a career-high 83 yards last Saturday against Rutgers. Bell now leads the Wolverines in both catches (17) and receiving yards (263) on the year.

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

Ryan Tice • TheWolverine

Former Michigan football safety Jabrill Peppers scored his first NFL touchdown — and the cherry on top was that it came off an interception of a former Ohio State star. The New York Giants strong safety picked off Dwayne Haskins in the third quarter to provide his team's final touchdown in a 24-3 win. He also posted six tackles (second most on his team) and defended an additional pass.

Peppers was one of two former Wolverines included on Pro Football Focus' (PFF) Team of the Week, along with Detroit Lions guard Graham Glasgow.

Video of Peppers' and updates on every other former Wolverine in the NFL, including a second straight game with a sack for Taco Charlton and an outstanding Monday night performance from Devin Bush Jr., are 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 3-1 Packers for their practice squad, where he still resides.

QB Tom Brady, New England Patriots

Kept the Patriots undefeated at 4-0 with a 16-10 win at Buffalo ... Completed 18 of 39 passes (46.2 percent) for 150 yards with no touchdowns and one interception ... On the season, he has completed 90 of 145 passes (62.1 percent) for 1,061 yards with seven touchdowns and one pick ... Holds a passer rating of 97.5 ... Is tied for 10th in the league in touchdown throws, and ranks 11th in passer rating among players with more than 60 attempts ... Also is 14th in passing yards.

TE Ian Bunting, Free Agent

Was released by the 0-3 Jets last week.

LB Devin Bush Jr., Pittsburgh Steelers

Notched his first NFL sack and totaled nine tackles (seven solo), including three for loss, and one pass broken up in the 1-3 Steelers' 27-3 win over the Bengals ... His tackle total ranked second on the team, and he was in for all 69 defensive snaps while also appearing on special teams ... Through four contests and three starts, he has 37 total stops (24 solo) with a sack, one pass broken up and three fumble recoveries ... He leads the NFL in fumble recoveries ... His tackle tally is tied for ninth in the league, while he is tied for 10th in solo stops ... No rookie has more total tackles or solo stops, and he leads all first-year players by nine in the former and six in the latter.

TE Jake Butt, Denver Broncos

On injured reserve with the 0-4 Broncos after what he called on Twitter a "minor scope" to his knee.

DE Taco Charlton, Miami Dolphins

Racked up a sack for the second straight week, in the 2-2 Dolphins' 30-10 loss to the Chargers ... He started for the first time this year and finished with six tackles, which tied for third on the squad and tied his career high ... Also notched a pair of QB hits.

WR Jehu Chesson, Washington Redskins

Is on 0-4 Washington's practice squad.

DE Frank Clark, Kansas City Chiefs

Started and racked up two tackles with one quarterback hit in the 4-0 Chiefs' 34-30 win at Detroit ... Has started all four games, while totaling nine stops with one sack and an interception.

C/G Mason Cole, Arizona Cardinals

Played four special teams snaps in the 0-3-1 Cardinals' 27-10 loss to the Seahawks ... Has appeared off the bench in all four games.

WR Devin Funchess, Indianapolis Colts

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

LB Rashan Gary, Green Bay Packers

Played 18 defensive snaps (29 percent) on defense and also on special teams in the 3-1 Packers' 34-27 loss to the Eagles ... He notched a tackle ... Has appeared in four contests and racked up five stops with a sack and fumble recovery.

LB Ben Gedeon, Minnesota Vikings

Came off the bench to log a season-best five tackles in the 2-2 Vikings' 16-6 loss to the Bears ... Was in for 18 defensive snaps (25 percent) and 16 special teams plays (80 percent) ... Has started twice and appeared in three games this year while totaling six take-downs.

TE Zach Gentry, Pittsburgh Steelers

Appeared in his second straight game and was in for 25 offensive snaps (42 percent) and two special teams plays (nine percent) ... Has played in two games but not recorded any stats outside of a tackle after a fumble recovery for the 1-3 Steelers.

OL Graham Glasgow, Detroit Lions

Started at right guard in 2-1-1 Detroit's 34-30 loss to the Chiefs ... Played 64 snaps of a possible 77 (83 percent) and also appeared on special teams ... Despite missing some time, he was still included on PFF's Team of the Week, after posting the highest grade in the

league at his position and actually among all guards (86.7) ... The outlet also noted he has produced a run-blocking grade of 88.0 or higher in two of four weeks so far ... Has started all four games this year.

DT Ryan Glasgow, Cincinnati Bengals

Was not active with a thigh injury for the second straight week for the Bengals ... Has started once and played in two games so far, notching two tackles.

DE Brandon Graham, Philadelphia Eagles

Started and tallied a pair of tackles, including one for loss, plus recovered a fumble in the Eagles' 34-27 win over the Packers ... Has started all four games so far this year and notched 10 tackles with a fumble recovery.

QB Chad Henne, Kansas City Chiefs

On injured reserve for the 4-0 Chiefs after breaking his ankle in the preseason.

RB Karan Higdon, Houston Texans

Is on the 2-2 Texans' practice squad.

S Lano Hill, Seattle Seahawks

Came off the bench to record a pair of stops in the 3-1 Seahawks' 27-10 win over the Cardinals ... Played six defensive snaps (six percent) and 15 special teams plays (58 percent) ... Has appeared in all four games (two starts) and notched six stops.

DT Maurice Hurst, Oakland Raiders

Came off the bench to appear on 37 defensive snaps (47 percent) and five special teams plays (17 percent), but did not record any statistics ... Has started twice this year and played in every contest with eight tackles and one pass broken up.

FB Joe Kerridge, Cleveland Browns

On injured reserve with the 2-2 Browns.

OT Taylor Lewan, Tennessee Titans

Was serving a four-game suspension, but should return to his left tackle role this week for the 2-2 Titans.

CB Jourdan Lewis, Dallas Cowboys

Played 10 defensive snaps (14 percent) and nine special teams snaps (43 percent) in the 3-1 Cowboys' 12-10 loss to the Saints ... Did not record any statistics ... Has four stops and one pass broken up in four games played this year.

CB David Long, Los Angeles Rams

Was active on Sunday for the first time, but still did not play in the 3-1 Rams' 55-40 loss to the Buccaneers.

OL Erik Magnuson, Buffalo Bills

Currently resides on the 3-1 Bills' practice squad.

DT Bryan Mone, Free Agent

Played in the first three games and notched a trio of tackles for the 3-1 Seahawks, but was waived last week.

OL Patrick Omameh

Was in for nine offensive snaps (13 percent) — most of which he reported as an eligible receiver while lining up as an extra lineman — and four special teams plays (19 percent) in the 3-1 Saints' 12-10 win over the Cowboys ... Has played off the bench in two games this year.

S Jabrill Peppers, New York Giants

Racked up six tackles and two passes defended, including a 32-yard pick-six, in the 2-2 Giants' 24-3 win over Washington ... His tackle total ranked second on the team ... He was included on PFF's Team of the Week, after posting the second-highest grade in the league among safeties (91.3) ... According to the outlet, he was targeted four times in coverage and allowed one catch for five yards ... The strong safety has 27 tackles (18 solo) and three passes broken up with one interception (a pick-six) in four starts this year ... Ranks 42nd overall and 11th among safeties in the league in tackles ... Is also tied for 20th in passes defended (interceptions and passes broken up) ... Only three players have at least four passes defended and more tackles than him.

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 2-2 Jaguars after suffering an offseason setback during his rehab from a torn ACL.

OL Michael Schofield, Los Angeles Chargers

Started at right guard and was the only player on his team to be in for every offensive snap in the 2-2 Chargers' 30-10 win over the Dolphins ... Has not missed a snap yet this year while starting all four contests.

CB Brandon Watson, Jacksonville Jaguars

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

S Jarrod Wilson, Jacksonville Jaguars

Started at free safety in the 2-2 Jags' 26-24 win over the Broncos and tied a career high set in week two with eight tackles ... Posted a new career best with six solo stops ... Tied for second on his team in tackles ... Played every defensive snap and 11 special teams plays (31 percent) ... Has started every game and racked up 25 stops (17 solo) with one pass broken up on the year ... Is tied for 48th in the league for total tackles.

DE Chase Winovich, New England Patriots

Was in for just eight defensive snaps (10 percent), but logged an 11-yard sack in the 4-0 Patriots' 16-10 win over the Bills ... Also played on special teams ... Has played in every game off the bench and notched five tackles with three sacks ... Leads all rookies in quarterback takedowns.

DE Chris Wormley, Baltimore Ravens

Started in 2-2 Baltimore's 40-25 loss to the Browns and logged his first stat of the year with a tackle and a pass broken up ... Has started twice and appeared in all four games so far this year.

The Wolverine website screenshot shows a navigation bar with links for Home, Forums, Football, FB Recruiting, Basketball, BB Recruiting, More, News Ticker, Prospect Search, and Teams. The main content area features a 'Headlines' section with several article thumbnails. The largest thumbnail is titled 'Keys To The Game: Michigan Wolverines Football vs. Iowa' by Chris Balas, posted 41m ago. Other thumbnails include 'Coffee Bouts Which 2020 Michigan Commits Can Make Immediate Impacts?' by EJ Holland (2h ago), 'Michigan Wolverines Basketball: Several Staining Early In Practice' by Chris Balas (13h ago), 'Notebook: Iowa Head Coach Hank Fitzgerald Talks Injuries, Michigan' by Clayton Sawye (15h ago), 'The Wolverine Daily Newsstand: October 3' by Austin Fox (3h ago), and 'Blue Chips: Tiddly 2020 Michigan Commits' by EJ Holland (15h ago). A prominent yellow starburst banner in the foreground reads 'Start Your FREE 60-DAY TRIAL Today! Use Code: blue60'. At the bottom, there are links for 'Go Inside The Fort - Michigan Football Newsletter', 'News', 'More News', 'Forums', and 'Visit Forums'.

Jay Harbaugh Says Charbonnet Is ‘Good To Go,’ Discusses His 33-Carry Game

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

Running back has been one of the most intriguing positions to monitor on the Michigan Wolverines’ entire football team so far this season, thanks in large part to freshman Zach Charbonnet.

He burst onto the scene by averaging 95 rushing yards over the club’s first two games, with his 33-carry, three-touchdown performance Sept. 7 against Army generating plenty of headlines.

The youngster has been banged up ever since, however, and has only accumulated a combined 28 yards over the club’s last two games.

Head coach Jim Harbaugh admitted that 33 carries was/is way too many for the California native and that they are limiting his touches moving forward.

Running backs coach Jay Harbaugh, meanwhile, also chimed in on the matter for the first time Wednesday.

“Zach is good to go,” Jay Harbaugh revealed. “We take pride in taking care of our guys, and we wouldn’t start a player in a game who wasn’t totally healthy and ready to play at his best. You do your best to make sure the pace guys are playing at is sustainable for 13, 14 or even 15 games in a season.

“It’s just kind of common sense [that 33 carries is too many]. You don’t want that as a running back, but there are times in games where you get in a situation and it’s a little bit unavoidable. You can look at guys’ careers in colleges and in the NFL, and you’ll find outliers like that all over the place. It’s happened at Michigan in the past, and it doesn’t mean it’s the end of the world.

“It’s just not the most ideal thing. We obviously look at how Zach is playing and talk to him about how he feels. Then you do your best to make sure you’re taking care of your guys.

“We wouldn’t put a player in position to get himself hurt or make an injury worse, or put someone back in a game if it puts them at risk. Zach is a very unselfish team guy and isn’t one to ask for anything for himself. He’s always looking for ways to help out both the team and his buddies in the running back room.

“All our guys are like that, and there’s nobody complaining or causing a scene because they didn’t get what they wanted. Everyone knows we have a long-term vision and understand what it will take to get to where we want to be.”

Jim Harbaugh raved about Charbonnet’s pass-blocking abilities through the first two games of the season, and it became evident that he was the best blocker among the running backs, especially when senior Tru Wilson missed time with a broken hand.

Those abilities undoubtedly contributed to Charbonnet seeing the field more than red-

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shirt freshman Christian Turner through the club's first two games, though Jay Harbaugh revealed that each of the runners have progressed mightily in that department over the last several weeks.

"That's a huge key for anybody," the running backs coach explained. "Protecting your quarterback is the second priority after taking care of the ball. Anybody who doesn't do those things makes it really hard to get them on the field, and if you're not up to par in that regard, it's hard to move the ball and to win.

"Some of our guys who had a hard time with it in camp have come a long way. Christian Turner is a guy who can take a bad play and move on from it, using it as a fuel from Sunday to Friday. He wants to look at extra film and put in the extra work to make sure those mistakes don't happen again. A lot of people will often point out how he may have missed a block, but they don't realize how he also picked up five blitzes.

"That gets lost to the outside because people are looking for a young man to blame on Twitter and all that ... These kids work their butts off to improve their weaknesses."

Special teams/safeties coach Chris Partridge raved during his time with the media about the way Jim Harbaugh rallied the team together following the Sept. 21 blowout loss at Wisconsin, citing how the head man "put on a clinic" afterward.

Jay Harbaugh was asked today to describe in his own words his father's tactics last week, and noted how situations usually aren't as bad as people make them out to be.

"The world we're in wants everything to collapse, and for people to quit and drive their cars away [after a loss]," he said. "He [Jim Harbaugh] was able to sit us down and explain how the focus is now on Rutgers and how that's all that matters. He reassured everybody to get back to meetings and practices, and that everything will be good.

"That same message was consistent both after the Wisconsin game and after the 52-0 win [over Rutgers]. It's nice as a player and as a coach to have that kind of leadership that's consistent and that you can lean on while seeing the direction you're going in."

Michigan Football Notebook: Stagnant Running Game, Milton & More

Chris Balas • The Wolverine

Michigan's running game hasn't been good enough through four games and will need to improve if the Wolverines are going to stay competitive in the big games. Whether it's missed assignments, failing to hold blocks or missing holes, something has been off.

It's been magnified when freshman Zach Charbonnet has been on the sidelines, which he

has been for much of the last two games.

That needs to change Saturday. If Charbonnet is healthy enough to play — which position coach Jay Harbaugh confirmed he is this week — he needs to play, not just get a carry here and there. He looks healthy when he's running, and while 33 carries against Army is too much, they need him out there. He's by far U-M's best back.

Head coach Jim Harbaugh, meanwhile, has challenged his group up front to be more physical to help the backs out. He was pleased with the way they responded in a 52-0 win over Rutgers, even though it was largely hit or miss.

"There was some really good, physical play on the offensive line. There were quite a few really good samples," he said. "That's what we've been seeing in practice for a couple of months now ... it was good to see that in the game.

"I thought [fifth-year senior left tackle] Jon Runyan played his best game. I thought he was back more to his capabilities. He was slowed the first couple of weeks, and he wasn't moving around as well. As athletic as he is, probably Thursday, you saw things that kind of looked more like Jon.

"On Saturday, it looked like he was close to 100 percent. I don't know if he's completely 100 percent, but he looked close to me. He had an outstanding game, our most outstanding lineman in the game."

As it should have been against Rutgers. The Scarlet Knights haven't been competitive this year, and they'll be replaced Saturday by an Iowa team that will try to punch the Wolverines in the mouth early and doesn't give up much against the run.

The Hawkeyes have allowed only 3.5 yards per carry this year (36th nationally), while U-M is only managing 130.5 yards per game on the ground (tied for 94th). Still, Harbaugh said he was good with the effort against the Scarlet Knights.

"I thought [redshirt freshman right tackle] Jalen Mayfield made strides [against Rutgers]," Harbaugh said. "Consistently good are [senior guards] Ben Bredeson and Mike Onwenu. They're working better in there together, that group of five that hasn't always been. Five guys practicing each week and five guys playing in the game each week is part of the equation."

When they don't, you get something like you saw in the first quarter of the game at Wisconsin — someone missing an assignment that leads to a big hit and a fumble. "New playbook" wasn't an excuse on that one, offensive coordinator Josh Gattis said, given it was a play from last season they'd run well.

"We showed them [film] — when we execute, this is how this play goes," he said. "When we don't, this is the result of it. For us, it's a consistency deal. There hasn't been a lot thrown at them they haven't previously had experience with. There are some things still carried over from last year that were helpful and effective last year, running game schemes and that.

"That was a very similar type play they had success on last year, the same exact play. Ben [VanSumeren] is a tough kid and we love him, don't fault him for any situation. He's

been getting those reps, been running the ball ... probably hadn't been in any as many live situations, but he's got a number of counted reps as a runner carrying the football. It's our job to help support him so he gets through the hole clean and nobody touches him. Collectively, everybody's got to do their job, and part of my job is putting him in on plays he's comfortable with."

The mistakes have been uncharacteristic, Gattis said, given how they've performed in

practice. It comes back to hard work, focus and performing under pressure, something many of the players on this year's team have proven they can do.

They'll need to be at their best Saturday to beat an Iowa team that's typical of coach Kirk Ferentz — hard-nosed, tough and disciplined. A week later it's off to Illinois before the tough part of the schedule kicks in, starting with a game at Penn State.

"A lot of us have been through this before," Gattis said. "I told them the story how back in 2016, we [at Penn State] started the season 2-2, a little worse than now, lost 49-10 at Michigan and got embarrassed. The following week we played a 29-26 overtime game, then it clicked for the players and they went on to win the Big Ten championship.

"Sometimes adversity — though it's something you never want to use to bond — brings guys together. Sometimes it forms a bond. When you go through pressure situations, it only makes you tighter."

Michigan Redshirt Freshman QB Joe Milton Steps Up

Word had it redshirt freshman quarterback Joe Milton was at Schembechler Hall at 5:45 a.m. the Monday after the Wisconsin game, ready to prep for Rutgers. His extra effort has paid off — he looked the best he has in his young career in running for a touchdown and throwing for another last game.

"Joe was good. He's got to feel, coming out of the game, good about himself," Harbaugh said. "We feel good about the way he played.

"He's had some consecutive good weeks of practice, had another good one today. I thought he played really well. The touchdown throw was really good. He and [freshman wideout] Giles Jackson made an adjustment during the play — that was not the design of the play to have Giles turn out. Some people were talking that they weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing, but I informed them of my policy of not getting upset about touchdowns."

Jackson didn't break on the route, the coach said. Milton just threw to the open area and Jackson adjusted.

"Joe made the adjustment and Giles adjusted his route to the throw, which was a plus by Joe, plus-plus by Giles. I thought that was really good," Harbaugh noted.

One area in which Milton has improved — not trying to impale his receivers with every throw.

"He's worked on it, different ball flights, different appropriate throws," Harbaugh said. "Not everything is a line-drive fastball. There's a lot of elevation. There's medium elevation, there's a shorter throwing motion for shorter throws to make a catchable ball for a runner. Joe has responded and really worked on it. It's not an easy thing to do.

"... He's working really hard at it and he's coming along really well. It's really important to him, which is a must. It has to be that way to really get better, better and better; realizing there's always something to work on and something to improve. He's approached that with a real great attitude in that way, as well. We love Joe and it's fun to watch him develop. Keep it rolling."

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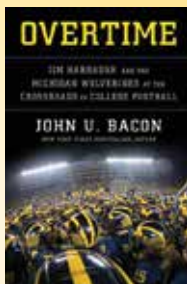
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