

## **Overtime: A Look Back at the Iowa Hawkeyes 24-3 Season-Opening Win Over the Wyoming Cowboys**

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By Jack Brandsgard ([jbrandsgard@hawkeyesmic.com](mailto:jbrandsgard@hawkeyesmic.com)) 09/0317

Iowa's defense was lights out in their 2017 debut, a convincing 24-3 victory over the Wyoming Cowboys. Led by Josey Jewell, whose 14 tackles, including a career high-tying two sacks and 2.5 tackles for loss, earned him the Walter Camp National Defensive Player of the Week award, the Hawkeyes shut down Wyoming's star quarterback Josh Allen.

Allen came into the game tabbed as a surefire top-10 pick in next year's NFL Draft. He saw his stock take a hit as he was limited to 23-of-40 passing for 174 yards and two interceptions. He also struggled to make plays with his feet, as the Cowboys' signal caller was wrangled to the ground twice by The Outlaw, once more by freshman AJ Epenesa, and finished with -10 rushing yards on eight attempts.

Speaking of Epenesa, it's officially all aboard the hype train for the Samoan Sensation. He mostly saw action on third downs in passing situations where he could pin his ears back and get after the quarterback, and he was effective in doing so. Epenesa's combination of power and quickness are unbelievable for being 18 years old.

Iowa's starting linebackers combined for 38 tackles—14 by Jewell, 13 for Ben Niemann, and 11 by Bo Bower. It was as good of a collective performance as I've seen from them. Wyoming head coach Craig Bohl agreed, saying that Iowa's front seven was as good as any he's seen in a long time. Even Josh Allen heaped on the praise for Iowa's defensive unit, saying it was the best defense he'd face all year.

The secondary was solid, too, even without starter Manny Rugamba. Josh Jackson earned his first career pick when he undercut an out route before returning it 41 yards to set up a field goal. Jake Gervase was solid in his first career start, and while I'm still bearish on Miles Taylor, he had a productive game with eight tackles.

The defense will need to continue to anchor Iowa's 2017 team. The offense took a while to awaken from its offseason slumber, as evidenced by their first four drives ending with a punt, interception, punt, and fumble. But the offensive unit, led by sophomore Nate Stanley, bounced back after a rough first quarter.

Stanley started the game 0-4 before connecting on eight of his next ten passes for 125 yards and three touchdowns, which tied Drew Tate for the most scores through the air in a season opener under Kirk Ferentz. Stanley struggled to secure the ball, throwing an interception and forking over two fumbles. One fumble led to the defining stretch of the game.

With two minutes left in the first half, Iowa's offense took the field at their own 24-yardline looking to convert their first chance at a two-minute drill. Akrum Wadley carried three times to move the ball near midfield. Stanley then made the wrong check at the line and zigged when everyone else zagged. It turned into a broken play, and Stanley compounded his error by fumbling. Wyoming recovered and was in business at the Iowa 43.

Then Iowa's 43 reminded everyone why he was named a Preseason First Team All-American by the AP. Jewell broke through the line and pressured Allen, forcing him to retreat 19 yards before feebly flicking the ball out of bounds. Allen was flagged for intentional grounding, and Iowa's defense got a third down stop to force a punt. Wyoming's punter Tim Zaleski then secured his spot on SportsCenter's Not Top 10 with his whiff of a punt, and Stanley took advantage by connecting with Noah Fant for a touchdown, the pair's second of the day. That made the score 14-3 right before the half and served as a gut punch for Wyoming.


Stanley connected with Nick Easley for a score in the third quarter on a play in which Easley dragged Des Moines native Rico Gafford backyard football-style into the endzone. Easley's four catches for 77 yards and a score didn't measure the degree of difficulty the plays required. His reception where the defender's body shielded his vision was remarkable, and his touchdown displayed his ability to track the ball in the air and his soft hands.

Iowa's rushing duo of James Butler and Akrum Wadley—a pair a friend of mine nicknamed "ButWad"—was also impressive in their debut together. Wadley high-stepped his way to 116 yards on 24 carries, none more impressive than his 22-yard gain on third and 21 in which he reversed field and broke a defender's ankles. In doing so, Wadley became the second player under Kirk Ferentz to rush for 100-plus yards in consecutive season openers (Fred Russell, 02-03). My first takeaways from Butler are that he runs behind his pads and that he's deceptively quick. I had somebody involved with the program tell me he'd take Butler over LeShun Daniels any day.

ButWad's statistics were even more impressive considering they were running behind a hodge-podge offensive line. James Daniels' knee injury forced Keegan Render to play center for the first time since high school, Sean Welsh was at guard for the first time in a while, and Ross Reynolds saw the first real action of his career.

Overall, the Hawkeyes were impressive in their first go around of 2017. I'm interested to see what adjustments are made by the coaching staff, particularly new OC Brian Ferentz, heading into Iowa State week.

Iowa-Wyoming Week Content is at [HawkeyesMic.com/Football](http://HawkeyesMic.com/Football).

WYOMING		3	IOWA HAWKEYES		24	Final																																																																																																																																																													
<b>WYOMING RECEIVING</b> End of game, clock 00:00, [00:00] Team rush for loss of 2 yards to the WY29. Butler, James rush up middle for 6 yards to the WY27. 1ST DOWN IOWA (WILSON, Logan). Wadley, Akrum rush right for 3 yard to the WY33 (GRANDERSON, C./CRALL, Garrett).		<b>SCORE BY QUARTER</b> <table border="1"> <tr><th>TEAM</th><th>1</th><th>2</th><th>3</th><th>4</th><th>TOT</th></tr> <tr><td>IOWA</td><td>0</td><td>3</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>WYOMING</td><td>0</td><td>14</td><td>7</td><td>3</td><td>24</td></tr> </table>		TEAM	1	2	3	4	TOT	IOWA	0	3	0	0	3	WYOMING	0	14	7	3	24	<b>GAME COMPARISON</b> <table border="1"> <tr><th>STAT</th><th>IOWA</th><th>WYOMING</th></tr> <tr><td>Total Yds</td><td>233</td><td>283</td></tr> <tr><td>Rush Yds</td><td>59</td><td>138</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass Yds</td><td>174</td><td>125</td></tr> <tr><td>Penalties</td><td>5-40</td><td>3-25</td></tr> <tr><td>1st Downs</td><td>15</td><td>16</td></tr> <tr><td>3rd Downs</td><td>5-18</td><td>4-13</td></tr> <tr><td>4th Downs</td><td>1-2</td><td>2-2</td></tr> <tr><td>Total Plays</td><td>70</td><td>56</td></tr> <tr><td>Avg Yds/Play</td><td>3.3</td><td>4.7</td></tr> <tr><td>Red Zone</td><td>0-0</td><td>1-1</td></tr> <tr><td>Time of Poss</td><td>31:06</td><td>28:54</td></tr> <tr><td>Turnovers</td><td>2</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Pts Off Tums</td><td>3</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Fumbles-Lost</td><td>1-0</td><td>4-3</td></tr> <tr><td>Sacks</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>TFL</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr> </table>		STAT	IOWA	WYOMING	Total Yds	233	283	Rush Yds	59	138	Pass Yds	174	125	Penalties	5-40	3-25	1st Downs	15	16	3rd Downs	5-18	4-13	4th Downs	1-2	2-2	Total Plays	70	56	Avg Yds/Play	3.3	4.7	Red Zone	0-0	1-1	Time of Poss	31:06	28:54	Turnovers	2	4	Pts Off Tums	3	3	Fumbles-Lost	1-0	4-3	Sacks	2	3	TFL	6	7																																																																																									
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