

OUTBACK BOWL  
MISSISSIPPI STATE VS IOWA

TAMPA, Fla. -- The Iowa Hawkeyes lost a yard on the last play of the Outback Bowl, pushing their final rushing total to minus 15 yards, and didn't mind a bit.

They ran the play from victory formation.

Safety Jake Gervase's interception in the end zone helped preserve a late lead, and a ball-hawking defense compensated for a sputtering offense as Iowa beat No. 18 Mississippi State 27-22 on Tuesday.

Gervase also batted down an errant fourth-down pass to end the Bulldogs' final drive at the Iowa 32 with 25 seconds left. Two earlier Mississippi State threats in the fourth quarter led to only three points.

The Hawkeyes totaled just 199 yards, with 75 coming on a touchdown pass from Nathan Stanley to Nick Easley , but they converted three takeaways into 17 points.

The Hawkeyes won despite losing 27 inches per rush. Their three running backs totaled 4 yards in 15 carries.

"We had a hard time blocking their front," coach Kirk Ferentz said. "Defense really bailed us out."

Iowa (9-4) earned its biggest postseason victory since an Orange Bowl win over Georgia Tech to cap the 2009 season. Mississippi State (8-5) lost to a team outside the top 15 for the first time.

Trailing 24-19, the Bulldogs had a first down at the Iowa 1 early in the fourth quarter, but three quarterback draws lost 2 yards and they settled for a field goal.

They were again on the verge of taking the lead with nine minutes left, but receiver Stephen Guidry bobbled a tipped pass in the end zone, and Gervase snatched it away.

"Sometimes you get lucky," Gervase said.

The Hawkeyes then drove 50 yards for a field goal, the game's final score.

"Bowl games are a lot like early season games, where turnovers and penalties really factor in," Ferentz said. "If you aren't on top of that part of your game because you haven't played in a while, it can be a really tough thing. Obviously it helped us today being a little bit more opportunistic."

Iowa had no penalties, while Mississippi State was penalized 90 yards, including a holding call that negated a 51-yard completion.

"Too many missed opportunities, too many penalties," Bulldogs coach Joe Moorhead said. "Can't turn the ball, can't give up explosive plays, can't have penalties take scores off the board. We didn't do enough to earn the right to win."

Mississippi State receiver Osirus Mitchell put it another way.

"We definitely beat ourselves," he said. "They weren't better than us."

A takeaway helped Iowa score two touchdowns in 97 seconds for a 17-6 lead -- especially impressive against a team that allowed only 12 TDs during the regular season.

Mississippi State rallied with two touchdowns in 18 seconds to go up 19-17. Quarterback Nick Fitzgerald gave the Bulldogs the advantage on a nifty 33-yard touchdown run , his 100th career score rushing or passing.

But on their next possession, Fitzgerald's tipped pass was intercepted by defensive lineman Chauncey Golston. Stanley then scrambled to convert a fourth and 1, and on the next play he hit Easley with an 8-yard score to put Iowa ahead to stay, 24-19.

MAKING THE ADJUSTMENT

Easley had a career-high 104 yards receiving on eight catches and was chosen the most valuable player. He nearly ran out from under his helmet on his long touchdown.

"I had a little bit of a malfunction with my helmet strap -- a little piece broke the play before," he said. "As I was running, it started coming off a little bit. Thankfully I was able to pull it back on and continue to run."

Easley and Gervase played their final game as seniors who walked on.

"It's how we're built," Ferentz said.

INJURY REPORT

Running back Kylin Hill left the game when he took a hit to the helmet in the fourth quarter, but he was back in the lineup on the Bulldogs' final possession.

Moorhead said Hill cleared the concussion protocol.

"I'm good," Hill tweeted with a thumbs-up emoji after the game.

TAKEAWAYS

Iowa will likely finish in the Top 25 for only the second time in the past nine seasons. Ferentz concluded his 20th season at Iowa and improved to 152-101, including 8-8 in bowl games.

The down-to-the-wire finish was a rarity for the Bulldogs, who had only one other game decided by fewer than 14 points.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
MSST	6	0	13	3	22
IOWA	0	17	7	3	27

Scoring Summary -----

	MSST	IOWA
<b>FIRST QUARTER</b>		
MSST FG 6:37		
Jace Christmann 44 Yd Field Goal		
10 plays, 39 yards, 4:50	3	0
MSST FG 0:45		
Jace Christmann 42 Yd Field Goal		
9 plays, 23 yards, 3:54	6	0
<b>SECOND QUARTER</b>		
IOWA FG 10:02		
Miguel Recinos 44 Yd Field Goal		
10 plays, 49 yards, 5:43	6	3
IOWA TD 7:55		
Nick Easley 75 Yd pass from Nate Stanley (Miguel Recinos Kick)		
1 play, 75 yards, 0:11	6	10
IOWA TD 6:18		
Ihmirm Smith-Marsette 15 Yd pass from Nate Stanley (Miguel Recinos Kick)		
2 plays, 13 yards, 0:42	6	17
<b>THIRD QUARTER</b>		
MSST TD 11:26		
Kylin Hill 1 Yd pass from Nick Fitzgerald (Two-Point Pass Conversion Failed)		
3 plays, 6 yards, 1:12	12	17
MSST TD 11:08		
Nick Fitzgerald 33 Yd Run (Jace Christmann Kick)		
1 play, 33 yards, 0:18	19	17
IOWA TD 1:55		
Nick Easley 8 Yd pass from Nate Stanley (Miguel Recinos Kick)		
6 plays, 32 yards, 2:44	19	24
<b>FOURTH QUARTER</b>		
MSST FG 12:04		
Jace Christmann 20 Yd Field Goal		
5 plays, 49 yards, 2:40	22	24
IOWA FG 5:51		
Miguel Recinos 40 Yd Field Goal		
6 plays, 50 yards, 2:51	22	27

Team Stats	MSST	IOWA
First Downs	15	11
Total Yards	342	199
Total Plays	74	51
Avg Gain Per Play	4.6	3.9
Net Yards Rushing	190	-15
Rushes	42	20
Yards Per Rush	4.5	-0.8
Net Yards Passing	152	214
Comp-Att	14-32	21-31
Yards Per Pass	4.8	6.9
Times Sacked	1	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	-7	-21
Interceptions	2	1
Punts	5	7
Punt Average	50.4	34.4
Penalties	8	0
Penalty Yards	90	0
Fumbles	1	1
Fumbles Lost	1	1
Possession	33:34	26:26

Individual Stats

RUSHING

	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
MSST					
7 Nick Fitzgerald	20	103	5.2	33	1
8 Kylin Hill	12	43	3.6	9	0
26 Aeris Williams	6	22	3.7	8	0
21 Nick Gibson	1	12	12.0	12	0
10 Keytaon Thompson	3	10	3.3	5	0
IOWA					
28 Toren Young	3	7	2.3	3	0
21 Ivory Kelly-Martin	5	0	0.0	2	0
10 Mekhi Sargent	7	-3	-0.4	5	0
4 Nate Stanley	4	-18	-4.5	3	0

PASSING

	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
MSST							
7 Nick Fitzgerald	14	32	152	4.8	1	2	81.5
IOWA							
4 Nate Stanley	21	31	214	6.9	3	1	151.2

Rushing

RECEIVING

	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
MSST					
1 Stephen Guidry	1	51	51.0	51	0
87 Osirus Mitchell	2	42	21.0	34	0
26 Aeris Williams	3	19	6.3	8	0
2 Dedrick Thomas	2	16	8.0	15	0
8 Kylin Hill	3	12	4.0	7	1
82 Farrod Green	1	7	7.0	7	0
81 Justin Johnson	2	5	2.5	3	0
IOWA					
84 Nick Easley	8	104	13.0	75	2
38 T.J. Hockenson	3	43	14.3	22	0
12 Brandon Smith	3	33	11.0	12	0
6 Ihmir Smith-Marsette	4	29	7.3	15	1
10 Mekhi Sargent	1	4	4.0	4	0
28 Toren Young	2	1	0.5	3	0