

WEEK ELEVEN
N'WESTERN AT IOWA

IOWA CITY, Iowa -- Northwestern clinched bowl eligibility and a spot in its conference title game on the same day. Only in the Big Ten West. Isaiah Bowser ran for 165 yards and a touchdown and Northwestern upset Iowa 14-10 on Saturday to clinch a spot in the Big Ten Championship. The Wildcats will now await their opponent for the league title game in Indianapolis next month. Despite a 6-4 overall record, Northwestern downed the likes of Purdue, Wisconsin and Iowa to reach the top of the division with a 6-1 conference record.

"This team has overcome a ton of adversity," Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald said. "We got beat up. We had a bunch of injuries, lost some tough games there. The brotherhood in that locker room is the glue that kept everything together."

Bennett Skowronek's 32-yard touchdown that came off an incredible catch in the fourth quarter gave the Wildcats a 14-10 lead they wouldn't surrender. After a first half that yielded just three total points on a field goal from Iowa kicker Miguel Recinos, the scoring ramped up in the second. Bowser hit a hole for a 34-yard touchdown to give the Wildcats their first lead of the game. Bowser was the only Wildcat to surpass 45 yards from scrimmage other than quarterback Clayton Thorson, and his performance certainly gave Northwestern a boost after a first half in which it only posted 75 total yards.

"I think (the touchdown) got us going," Bowser said. "Obviously, not scoring in the first half, so coming out and scoring in the second half, that was big for our offense and big for our defense too, knowing that they had a lead."

After Recinos missed a field goal to respond, Iowa safety Jake Gervase intercepted Clayton Thorson's pass off a tip. Iowa cashed in just two plays later with Nate Stanley's 28-yard touchdown pass to Ihmir Smith-Marsette. The Hawkeyes had a chance to tie the game late in the fourth, but Northwestern's Cameron Ruiz forced Mekhi Sargent to fumble, and the Wildcats jumped on it. Iowa had one final chance with under two minutes to go, but another fumble by Ivory Kelly-Martin ended the Hawkeyes' chances.

"They outplayed us tonight," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said. "Nobody's more disappointed right now than the 115, 116 guys on our football team. They've worked hard, they've invested and I thought they competed hard tonight. But I guess it wasn't good enough."

Stanley threw for 269 yards and a touchdown for Iowa (6-4, 3-4), losers of three straight.

THE TAKEAWAY

Northwestern: Folks might chide the Big Ten for having a four or even five-loss team represent the league in its championship game. But the fact of the matter is that the Wildcats are 6-1 in the conference for the first time since 1996, when they won nine games and played in the Citrus Bowl.

Iowa: What a disastrous turn of events in Iowa City. Three weeks ago, fans were wondering if this was one of the most talented teams coach Kirk Ferentz has ever had. Now they're simply hoping to finish above .500 in the Big Ten.

MISSING MEN

The Hawkeyes were without receiver Brandon Smith, fullback Brady Ross, and tight end Shaun Beyer, while the Wildcats took the field down cornerback Trae Williams, safety Jared McGee and kicker Charlie Kuhbander. Cornerback Montre Hartage also left the game early, hurting the Wildcats' depth even more.

Kuhbander's injury could have been bad news for Northwestern, as punter Jake Collins missed a 38-yard field goal that would have given the Wildcats a lead. Northwestern's offense covered for him, though, scoring a touchdown on its next drive.

TURNING POINT

With a 3-0 lead, Iowa attempted to pin the Wildcats inside their own 5 and Josh Turner was there to down the ball, but it rolled into the end zone anyway. After gaining decent field position from a touchback, Iowa cornerback Matt Hankins was flagged for pass interference that set up Bowser's touchdown run to give Northwestern its first lead.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
NW	0	0	7	7	14
IOWA	0	3	7	0	10

Scoring Summary-----				
SECOND QUARTER			NW	IOWA
IOWA FG 0:56				
Miguel Recinos 46 Yd Field Goal				
6 plays, 26 yards, 1:51			0	3
THIRD QUARTER			NW	IOWA
NW TD 9:19				
Isaiah Bowser 34 Yd Run (Jake Collins Kick)				
6 plays, 80 yards, 2:24			7	3
IOWA TD 4:27				
Ihmir Smith-Marsette 28 Yd pass from Nate Stanley (Miguel Recinos Kick)				
2 plays, 42 yards, 0:36			7	10
FOURTH QUARTER			NW	IOWA
NW TD 9:27				
Bennett Skowronek 32 Yd pass from Clayton Thorson (Jake Collins Kick)				
4 plays, 46 yards, 0:59			14	10

Team Stats	NW	IOWA
First Downs	19	16
Total Yards	306	333
Total Plays	76	63
Avg Gain Per Play	4.0	5.3
Net Yards Rushing	184	64
Rushes	46	22
Yards Per Rush	4.0	2.9
Net Yards Passing	122	269
Comp-Att	15-30	27-41
Yards Per Pass	4.1	6.6
Times Sacked	2	1
Yds Lost To Sacks	-13	-4
Interceptions	2	0
Punts	7	7
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	5	3
Penalty Yards	40	35
Fumbles	0	2
Fumbles Lost	0	2
Possession	31:06	28:54

Individual Stats							
RUSHING							
NW	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long		
Isaiah Bowser	31	165	5.3	1	34		
Chad Hanaoka	2	18	9.0	0	13		
Solomon Vault	3	7	2.3	0	5		
Clayton Thorson	5	1	0.2	0	8		
Riley Lees	2	0	0.0	0	2		
Team	3	-7	-2.3	0	0		
IOWA	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long		
Mekhi Sargent	10	27	2.7	0	8		
Toren Young	3	14	4.7	0	11		
Ivory Kelly-Martin	3	9	3.0	0	3		
Ihmir Smith-Marsette	1	8	8.0	0	8		
Nate Stanley	3	6	2.0	0	6		
Austin Kelly	1	1	1.0	0	1		
Tyrone Tracy Jr.	1	-1	-1.0	0	0		
PASSING							
NW	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Clayton Thorson	15	30	122	4.1	1	2	21.0
IOWA	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Nate Stanley	27	41	269	6.6	1	0	48.5

RECEIVING							
NW	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long		
Bennett Skowronek	3	45	15.0	1	32		
Isaiah Bowser	3	33	11.0	0	12		
Cameron Green	5	30	6.0	0	9		
Ramaud Chiaokhiao-Bowman	1	8	8.0	0	8		
Trey Pugh	1	4	4.0	0	4		
Riley Lees	1	2	2.0	0	2		
Chad Hanaoka	1	0	0.0	0	0		
IOWA	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long		
Ihmir Smith-Marsette	4	90	22.5	1	36		
T.J. Hockenson	7	89	12.7	0	37		
Nick Easley	8	53	6.6	0	13		
Mekhi Sargent	3	19	6.3	0	10		
Ivory Kelly-Martin	3	12	4.0	0	8		
Toren Young	1	6	6.0	0	6		
Noah Fant	1	0	0.0	0	0		