

Blackhawks look to seal home-field advantage

The Iowa Blackhawks look to clinch home-field advantage for their first-round playoff game when they take on the rival Nebraska Bears on Saturday at 7:05 p.m. in American Professional Football League action at the Mid-America Center.

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The Iowa Blackhawks look to clinch home-field advantage for their first-round playoff game when they take on the rival Nebraska Bears on Saturday at 7:05 p.m. in American Professional Football League action at the Mid-America Center.

The Blackhawks (4-3) come into the game with some momentum, having beaten the Kansas Storm 54-3 last Saturday to snap a two-game losing streak. They will be aided by the return of wide receiver Kurt Ferguson and defensive lineman Shun Wells from injuries.

"Shun Wells will be running at about 75 percent, but he gives us what we need out of the nose guard position," said Blackhawks general manager Jake Hiffernan.

Wide receiver Yano Jones will also be healthy this week after playing hurt against the Storm.

"Even (when hurt), he can do some damage," said Hiffernan. "Once we get him close to 100 percent, he'll be the go-to guy again."

The Blackhawks look to regain their form from the first half of the season now that they're healthy.

"The injuries have taken their toll," Hiffernan said. "You have to mix up your play scheme to accommodate what's on the field."

Iowa will take on a talented Nebraska team that looks to clinch the final APFL playoff spot. The players on the Blackhawks and Omaha-based Bears (3-2) are familiar with each other, with some former Bears currently playing for the Blackhawks.

"We've been looking forward to this game all season," said Hiffernan. "With playoff implications and the border rivalry, (this game) is very important.

"They're familiar with each other as former teammates. The football community is pretty tight in this area."

A big key to Nebraska's game is a tough defense. The Bears also have a strong passing game, led by Troy Travis, the former Omaha Beef quarterback who also once won the National Indoor Football League MVP.

"He makes things happen when you think there's nothing there to happen," Hiffernan noted. "The guy has tremendous skills."

Hiffernan remains confident that the Blackhawks will play well against their regional rival in their final regular-season game and clinch home-field advantage for the playoff game.

"They look focused and they'll come out sharp," Hiffernan said "We'll see a much more poised team Saturday than we've seen the past couple of home games.

"This game is probably the most important game of the season."

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The Blackhawks will hold the first annual "Tithing for Touchdowns" food drive to benefit the Open Door Mission. The first 500 fans that donate a non-perishable food item will receive a free Wicked Wing Spirit Towel. Doors open at 6 p.m.

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