

## Blackhawks in top form

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Saturday night's game between the Iowa Blackhawks and Kansas Koyotes at the Mid-America Center shouldn't have mattered since five-time defending league champion Kansas sewed up the American Professional Football League regular season crown weeks ago and Iowa had also secured a playoff spot.

With key starters returning to action and top play from mid-season signees, the Blackhawks played the most complete game of the year in front of a raucous crowd and earned its second win in team history over the Koyotes with a 47-34 triumph.

The win was the fifth straight for the Blackhawks (7-3) and a huge confidence builder before the playoffs.

Iowa never trailed in the game and Kansas made uncharacteristic mistakes including four turnovers.

Newcomer Jeff McQuinn blocked a kick that was converted for a score by Tion Wilson in the first quarter to push the Blackhawks to an early 14-7 lead. McQuinn also tipped a Nathan Bolden pass and pulled down the interception late in the fourth quarter that led to Elijah Simmons third rushing touchdown of the game.

McQuinn's heroics drew chants from the crowd "M-V-P" after the interception all but assured the win.

"I was really happy to help the Blackhawks beat an undefeated team," said former Lewis Central graduate McQuinn who received consideration from NFL teams after playing college football for Peru State. "Everyone came out tonight with a lot of energy and the defense was juiced."

Another key defensive play was a 45-yard interception return for a touchdown in the second quarter by Chris Moore who returned to action from an injury. Iowa's defense limited Kansas to four-of-10 passing in the second half.

"This game meant everything and we are finally healthy," said head coach and defensive coordinator Mike Wolff. "McQuinn and the entire defense were great and our offense had only one interception. Special teams were solid too. The 800-pound monkey is off our back now."

Early in the season, the Blackhawks record was 2-3 and playoff hopes were looking questionable. Injuries mounted and the roster dropped from 25 to 18 players.

"We sat back after the first five games to determine why we weren't winning," said offensive coordinator Justin Kammrad. "It's a great feeling having the team back to full strength and we're very confident after tonight's win."

Iowa alternated quarterbacks Jake Nimrod and Chuck Wright throughout the contest and mounted only 44 yards in the passing game.

"We're still evaluating which quarterback can lead us into the playoffs and we wanted to limit mistakes. Once we got up on top of the Koyotes, we wanted to control the clock and move the ball. We turned to the running game and kept the momentum in our favor," added Kammrad.

Simmons was the workhorse for the Blackhawks with 17 carries for 78 yards.

"I feel like it is my duty to produce and it feels good that the team depends on me to move the ball," said Simmons. "This game means so much because it gives us momentum for the playoffs and it lets everyone know that we can beat Kansas."

"When these two teams play, there is always electricity in the air. Emotions were high and there was a lot of energy," said Koyotes head coach Jim Green. "This is a legitimate rivalry and our timing was off. We didn't adapt to changes in the ballgame. We have to be mentally prepared to beat Iowa in the post season."

"It was a great win for them and we've had many close games with Iowa," said Kansas general manager Ralph Adams. "I thought we were ready for tonight's game but we just got out-played. We need better focus to beat a team like Iowa."

In a decision made official late Sunday, the Blackhawks will play Kansas on Saturday in the first round of the playoffs.

Kansas Koyotes 7 14 6 7 34

Iowa Blackhawks 14 17 3 13 47

Rushing: KS: Donnell Smith 9-35, Nathan Bolden 8 (-5), Mike Steen 3-8, IA: Elijah Simmons 17-78, Mike Stuart 7-20, Jake Nimrod 5-8.

Receiving: KS: Dwayne Allen 4-42, Mike Steens 1-25, Justin Wrecke 5-24, Rodney Fowler 1-9, Donnell Smith 1-3 IA: Mike Neville 1-11, Brad Triplett 1-8, Mike Stewart 1-8, Kurt Ferguson 1-8, Kaylon Price 1-7, Elijah Simmons 1-2.

Passing: KS: Nathan Bolden 12-26-113, IA: Jake Nimrod 3-6-27, Chuck Wright 3-6-17.

Scoring Summary:

IA Elijah Simmons 4-yard run (Jerry Lakin kick) 9:22 first quarter

KS - Mike Steens 1-yard run (Chris Thompson kick) 5:55 first quarter

IA - Tion Wilson blocked kick recovered in end zone (Lakin kick) 1:49 first quarter

KS - Justin Wrecke 5-yard pass from Nathan Bolden (Thompason kick) 11:14 second quarter

IA - Jake Nimrod 8-yard run (Lakin kick) 6:14 second quarter

IA - Chris Moore 45-yard interception return (Lakin kick) 5:32 second quarter

KS - Dwayne Allen 16-yard pass from Bolden (Thompson kick) 2:35 second quarter

IA - Jerry Lakin 18-yard field goal 0:00 second quarter

KS - Donnell Smith 3-yard pass from Bolden (Thompson kick) 10:01 third quarter

IA - Jerry Lakin 20-yard field goal 6:51 third quarter

IA - Elijah Simmons 3-yard run (Lakin kick) 11:13 fourth quarter

KS - Mike Steen 5-yard run (Thompson kick) 9:18 fourth quarter

IA - Elijah Simmons 2-yard run (Kick failed) :19 fourth quarter

Records: Kansas (8-1), Iowa (7-3).

