

## Sports

---

### Blackhawks play Bandits Friday

Print Page

By Tony Boone

Senior Writer

[tony.boone@nonpareilonline.com](mailto:tony.boone@nonpareilonline.com)

(712) 325-5756

Published: Friday, June 3, 2011 11:06 AM CDT

After suffering a controversial setback in Sedalia, Mo., last weekend, Iowa enters the final month of the American Professional Football League season with little margin for error.

The Blackhawks (4-3) carry a half-game lead over idle Mid-Missouri (4-4) for second place heading into Friday's home game with unbeaten Sioux City (8-0). Kickoff is set for 7:35 p.m.

"Certainly, we're in a mode right now where we're trying to get the highest possible seed in the playoffs we can," Iowa coach Mike Wolff said. "We're shooting for No. 2. No. 1 is out."

The Bandits have been dominant thus far in their first APFL season. They've scored 43 points or more in all eight of their games and can wrap up the regular-season crown with a win tonight.

Sioux City has already beaten the reigning two-time champion Blackhawks twice – winning 57-50 in a wild opener at the Tyson Event Center, then taking the rematch 50-26 at the MAC.

Last Sunday, the opportunistic Bandits pasted the overmatched Kansas City Matadors 112-0 while collecting 10 turnovers. They've forced 34 in all during their eight-game winning streak.

Ill-timed turnovers have been a bugaboo for Iowa recently. Mid-Missouri returned an interception for a touchdown in the final seconds last week to win 44-40 in a game it trailed by 18 only minutes earlier. Sioux City scored on an early pick-6 in its last trip to the MAC.

Blackhawk quarterback Chuck Wright said ball security is crucial for tonight's contest as his team tries to earn its way back into the title hunt. With only four games left, it's crunch time for Iowa.

"Every game's a must-win, but we've got enough veterans on the team who understand the goal is still attainable," Wright said. "If we play well and make it back to the title game, we'll have the opportunity to be the only team that has won the championship on the road.

"That should be the goal right now."

Counting tonight's contest, Iowa has only two home games left during the regular season. It also has road dates at Mid-Missouri and Kansas, which have historically been tough places to play.

Defensive end Ryan Hoden said everything the Blackhawks do at this point is critical. He feels his unit needs to be solid, starting tonight, if Iowa is going to make another title run.

"With a team like Sioux City, you really have to come focused," Hoden said. "We show moments where we're pretty good because we are fundamentally sound. But other times, we lose focus. Then they hit us with a big play when we make a mistake."

In the two previous meetings, the Bandits have hit six scoring passes from midfield or beyond against Iowa's defense. The Blackhawks may go with the smaller, quicker unit they used against Mid-Missouri last week in an attempt to limit those big plays.

With the path to the APFL title likely heading through Sioux City, Iowa would like to prove to itself that it's on the Bandits' playing level. Since the opener, no one has come close to the league leaders.

"It would give us a psychological advantage if we could knock off Sioux City Friday night," Wolff said. "Heading into the playoffs, that would be a huge win for us."