

IOWA'S WARPATH LEADS THEM TO CUMBRIA

IOWA @ CARLISLE

(Carlisle leads the all-time series between these two franchises 3-2-0)

Why?

This game will be an assessment on whether Iowa can break that frustration barrier to become a consistent and winning football team.

The Renegades' fourth-quarter rally fell just short in their season opener against the St. Louis Stallions. Since trailing 21-10 in the third-quarter of that game, Iowa has outscored their opponents 107-19. This includes wins over perennial contender Tampa Bay, as well as undefeated Nebraska. The Renegades made the playoffs last year for the first time since the 2022 season but lost a heartbreaker to the dreaded intra-division rival Stallions on a Mark Beverly 52-yard field goal with 00:14 on the clock.

Iowa may be headed back to playoffs for the second year-in-a-row if they can fend off a resurgent Nebraska squad, and the final annual hurdle of the division monarchy known as the St. Louis Stallions.

For Carlisle, it is a test of collective will as to how much of a window is left for the Blue Demons to loft that championship trophy with their current roster?

Carlisle is coming off a 13-3 campaign in 2023 but has some fierce competition in the form of the West Ham Mercurials.

The Blue Demons were whiplashed in the season opener by West Hampstead 57-21, giving up 24-points in the fourth-quarter. That was a wakeup call provided by the Mercs. Carlisle then held off rallies by both New Jersey and New York in weeks 2-and-3, before pounding the Bulldogs in week-four, 48-3.

The Carlisle franchise has evolved into one of the leagues' most consistent teams over the last few years. The Demons are 46-18 over the last four seasons while making the post-season in every one of those campaigns. Carlisle lost the 2021 championship to New Jersey 23-20 in overtime, and they also fell to Orlando 23-20 again in overtime in

the 2019 championship game. The Demons had recorded a franchise-best 15-1 regular season and 17-2 overall record.

What to watch for?

IOWA:

The Renegades have been a prolific passing powerhouse in the first quarter of the season; Iowa is third in total yards, and rank second in passing yardage. Quarterback **Michael Chase** is in the midst of a career year by ranking second in the CFA in passing yards with 1,429, fourth in touchdowns with eight, and tied for second with a QBR of 110.2; Chase is on pace for 5,700-yards this season, but needs to remain vigilant with the pigskin all while sporting an 8:1 touchdown-to-interception ratio.

Second-year **WR Kerry Banks** is one of the reasons for Chase's opulent output so far by being on the receiving end of 463-yards of those passes. It is uncommon that a team carries seven wide receivers, however, all of these receivers are gifted with acceleration from the snap. Veteran **Jose Bartlett** is taking advantage of the double-teaming of Banks to account for a 26.5-ypr average.

Keeping their signal-caller's uniform spotless is tasked to **OTs Tommy Stubbs** and **Rolando Martin**. This duo has compiled 38-pancakes while allowing only one sack.

Defensively, Iowa has been rock-steady since that third-quarter in Week-1. The Renegades are #1 in points allowed, total yards against, and passing yards against. Those 19-sacks and 15-PDs may not seem that tremendous, but they were timely.

The tip of the spear for the Renegades is **DE Edmund Settles**. Settles is a third-year pro that is not that fleet of foot, but has the intellect of out-clever and out-brawn the opposition.

Known as the "Tomahawk triplets" are linebackers **William Tam**, **Frank Johnson**, and **Eric Lively**, all ferocious tacklers that beat a warpath to the opposition's pocket.

you could possibly say that this secondary has built a monopoly of speed. All the corners possess breakneck giddyup, as well do the safeties. This is one of the reasons that Iowa's pass defense has been so effective, no one

ever gets loose.

CARLISLE:

Blue Demon quarterback **Joseph Michel** is a gunslinger and possesses a cannon arm with laser-guided precision. However, that cannon gets this former Nittany Lion in as much trouble as it gets him out of. Michel has thrown for over 4,000-yards in each of the previous three seasons, but his 59% completion percentage is attributed to not knowing when to drop a ball into a bucket rather than blow a hole in the said bucket; learning touch is an art form.

Carlisle's version of "thunder & lightning" is in the form of **RBs Mario Schofield** (5'11 190 lb.) and **Alec Williams** (6'2" 235 lb.). These two are also the reason the Demons have made maintained he better time of possession through ball control, which leads to wins and a top-ten ranking game.

With Michel letting it fly, there has to be someone there on the other end of those bullets and rainbows. Both **WRs Timmy Cannon** and **Willie Spellman** have ample velocity on the wings, but just as important is that both are pass-catching specialists. Though neither are imposing figures, they do require sufficient enough attention to keep opposing defenses from loading the box on a regular basis.

The Blue Demon interior is complemented by the ability to substitute **Steven McCabe**, **Arnoldo Smith**, and **Tyrone Stacy** in and out at either the center spot or either guard position. This is a luxury that most teams are not so privileged to have. With dubious bookends at the offensive tackle position, it is reasonable to conjecture why it is that Michel has to pull the trigger sooner than he might like to due to pressure from edges.

Linebacker/Defensive end **Frank Adame** leads this Blue Demon defense and the league in sacks through four-weeks of the season with nine; Carlisle in third collectively in the CFA in sacks with thirty-one. This former Fighting Irish grad has racked up double-digit sacks in six-of-his-seven seasons, putting up 20-Sacks and 101-Tcks last season, which earned him his first Pro Bowl invitation.

Not all of the consternation of opposing defensive coordinators is solely

placed on Adame. Carlisle boasts some formidable edge-rushers in **DEs Fred Seaton, Michael Rice, and Donald Merritt**; it seems that the rotation/substitution game plan works just as effectively on the defensive side of the ball as it does on the offensive side. Seaton and Rice have two Pro Bowl appearances apiece and have combined for 8-sacks on the young season.

On the defensive periphery are **CBs Tristan Quinones and Larry Warren**, both of whom are crafty quick, deceptively swift, and possess hands of stone; they can get in between the receiver and the ball...they just can't catch pull it in.

Solid run-stopper **SS Eric Ward**, is also Turbo-inspired defender but will be hobbled by a bad toe this week. Add to the mix **FS Stephen Shearer** (an Olympic Trials Invitee) and it is puzzling to see how the Blue Demons rank in the bottom half of the league in pass defense(?) Of course, most of that can be attributed to West Hams' 385-passing yards in Week-1.

TALE OF THE TAPE:

IOWA:

(Opponents combined record 9-7) [Renegade's' Run/Pass ratio 31%/69%]

Offense:

Points Scored – 28.0 (5th)

Total Yards – 462.0 (3rd)

Rush Yards – 77.3 (28th)

Pass Yards – 384.8 (2nd)

Defense:

Points Allowed – 10.0 (1st)

Total Yards Allowed – 272.5 (1st)

Rush Yards Allowed – 123.3 (25th)

Pass Yards Allowed – 149.3 (1st)

° Injuries of Note:

+ G Alton Cruz - Questionable (Torn meniscus)



CARLISLE:

(Opponents combined record 8-8) [Blue Demon's' Run/Pass ratio 53%/47%]

Offense:

Points Scored – 30.8 (4th)

Total Yards – 363.5 (12th)

Rush Yards – 143.0 (7th)

Pass Yards – 220.5 (22nd)

Defense:

Points Allowed – 26.8 (27th)

Total Yards Allowed – 371.0 (20th)

Rush Yards Allowed – 120.5 (21st)

Pass Yards Allowed – 250.5 (17th)

° Injuries of Note:

+ WR Edward Banks – Out 2-4 weeks (Torn biceps muscle)

My Pick:

The Carlisle squad is stocked with talent entering into or enjoying the primes of the careers. One can see a steady and persistent method to their success.

The Blue Demons are #1 in the CFA in punt-return average with a 27.1 mark, as well as two returns for scores. These sometimes overlooked and ancillary bookmarks can decide a close game. However, the Blue Demons are tops in the league with 220-penalty yards.

The Renegades have made strides, and this could be a turning-point game for their season's fortunes. But, until they prove themselves against a proven playoff team...on the road...I will have to side with contenders.

Carlisle - 24

Iowa - 21

The Line:

Line: Car (-1.5)

O/U: 48.0

~ Warren Pease – OSN Contributing Writer