

Glenn's Thoughts on Michigan Football

10/04/2026

Michigan's offense in the Western Michigan, Oklahoma, Iowa, and Minnesota games (I removed UTEP for obvious reasons) has a clear identity: **highly inconsistent, heavily dependent on a small number of productive possessions, and increasingly prone to empty drives**. The Iowa game showed what the offense *can* be; Minnesota showed the opposite extreme.

One important note: I'm using **drive-chart yardage** (in the appendix at the end) for the calculations below. That's why Minnesota totals 165 yards from the listed drives even though the official box score credits Michigan with 180 total offensive yards. The official box score confirms 49 offensive plays, 11 first downs, two offensive interceptions and a 20–14 loss. [University of Minnesota Athletics](#)

The four-game offensive picture

Opponent	Drives	Plays	Drive Yards	Yds/ Drive	Yds/ Play*	Off. Pts	Scoring Drives	Punts	Turnover/ Downs
Western Michigan	10	48	261	26.1	5.44	14	2	6	2
Oklahoma	10	58	256	25.6	4.41	17	3	7	0
Iowa	10	70	404	40.4	5.77	20	4	4	2
Minnesota	10	49	165	16.5	3.37	7	1	6	3
TOTAL	40	225	1,086	27.2	4.83	58	10	23	7

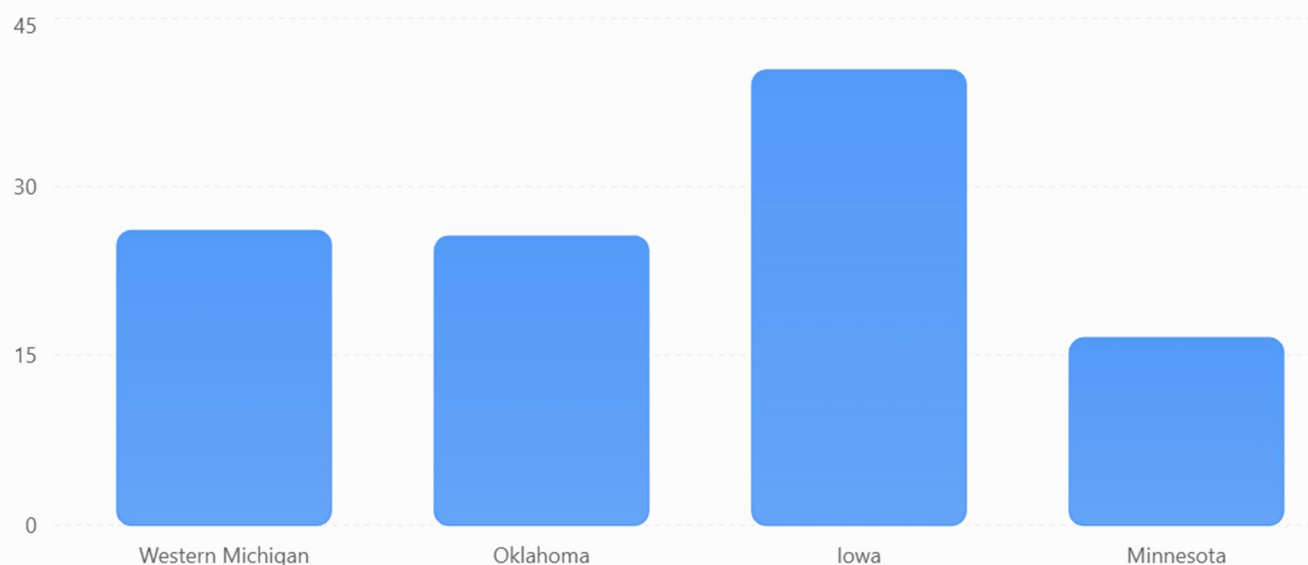
*Calculated from the drive data supplied, not necessarily identical to official NCAA team yards/play because drive accounting can differ.

The Iowa numbers align with the official game statistics: Michigan generated 429 official yards, 21 first downs and 6.3 yards per play but scored only 19 total points in the 20–19 loss. [Stats Archive](#)

Michigan offensive yards per drive. Iowa was the clear peak; Minnesota was the low point.

Michigan offensive yards per drive

Drive-chart production across the four games supplied. Iowa was the clear peak; Minnesota was the low point.



1. The biggest problem: too many possessions produce essentially nothing

Of Michigan's **40 drives**, the results are:

- **23 punts: 57.5%**
- **7 touchdowns: 17.5%**
- **3 field goals: 7.5%**
- **4 interceptions: 10%**
- **2 turnover on downs: 5%**
- **1 fumble: 2.5%**

Michigan has scored on only **10 of 40 possessions (25%)**.

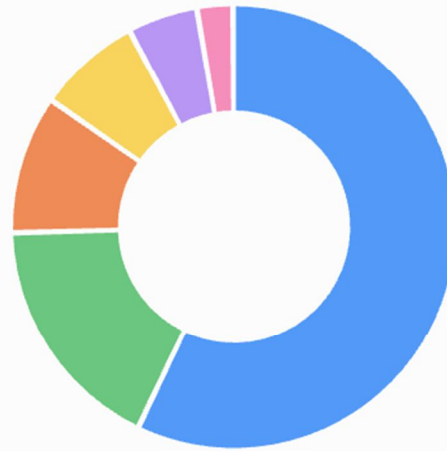
Even more striking way to look at it: **30 of 40 drives have ended without points (75%)**.

And the three-and-out/near-three-and-out issue is substantial. Michigan has had **13 drives lasting exactly three plays** — nearly one-third of all possessions.

That's particularly damaging because it doesn't just suppress scoring. It repeatedly sends the defense back onto the field and prevents the offense from developing any rhythm.

How Michigan's 40 drives ended

Nearly three out of every five possessions ended with a punt.



2. Iowa looks increasingly like an outlier

The most fascinating game in this dataset is Iowa.

Michigan's drive yardage:

15 → 89 → 59 → 62 → -3 → 45 → 43 → 75 → 12 → 7

Six different drives gained **40+ yards**.

Compare that with the other three games combined:

- Western Michigan: 2 drives of 40+
- Oklahoma: 1
- Minnesota: **0**

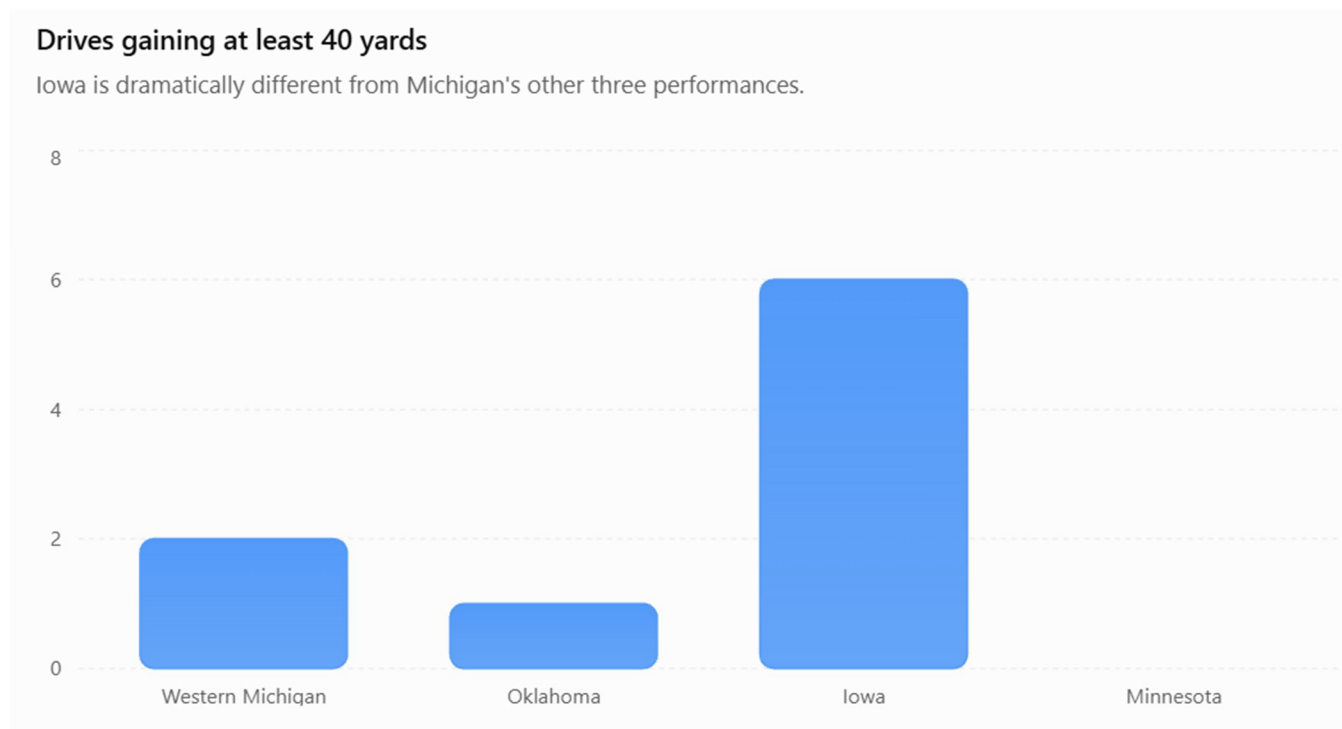
Michigan had **six 40-yard drives against Iowa and only three across the other 30 possessions combined**.

That is an enormous difference.

And Michigan still lost to Iowa because those drives weren't finished efficiently. The contemporary game analysis reached the same conclusion: Michigan moved the football but failed to capitalize on multiple scoring opportunities, including a fourth-down failure and an interception. [Maize n Brew](#)

Drives gaining at least 40 yards

Iowa is dramatically different from Michigan's other three performances.



That makes Iowa simultaneously encouraging and frustrating. It provides evidence that the offense is **capable of sustaining drives against a legitimate Big Ten defense**, but it hasn't replicated that performance.

3. Minnesota was a massive regression

This is probably the most concerning part of the analysis.

Michigan went from:

Iowa: 40.4 drive yards/possession

to

Minnesota: 16.5 drive yards/possession

That's a **59% decline** in drive production.

The Minnesota sequence is ugly:

23 → 36 → 34 TD → -2 → -3 → 5 INT → 0 INT → 33 → 2 → 37

There wasn't a **single 40-yard offensive drive**.

And Michigan's lone offensive touchdown began at the Minnesota 34 after the defense generated an interception. The offense therefore only needed **34 yards** to score. Michigan's other seven points came from a **79-yard interception return touchdown**, meaning the offense itself generated just seven points. So the final score of 20–14 actually makes the offensive performance look considerably better than it was.

Minnesota's 10 offensive possessions

6 punts

2 interceptions

1 turnover on downs

1 touchdown

That's a **10% scoring-drive rate**.

And **50% of the drives gained 10 yards or fewer**.

The official statistics reinforce how poor the performance was: Michigan had only 11 first downs, averaged 2.8 yards per rush, Bryce Underwood went 10-of-21 for 101 yards with two interceptions, and the team finished with 180 official yards. [University of Michigan Athletics](#)

4. The offense has been remarkably dependent on a handful of drives

This may be the statistic that best summarizes everything.

Michigan's 10 scoring drives generated:

581 drive yards

The other 30 possessions generated:

505 drive yards

In other words, just **25% of the possessions account for 53.5% of all drive yardage**.

On scoring possessions Michigan averages approximately:

7.75 yards per play

So when Michigan gets going, it can be extremely efficient.

The issue is that it doesn't happen frequently enough.

This isn't an offense consistently moving 35–50 yards and occasionally failing to finish. Outside Iowa, it has frequently alternated between an excellent drive and several possessions where almost nothing happens.

Western Michigan is the perfect example:

75 TD then: 17, 2, 6, 1, 25 INT, 29, 7, 24 Fumble

then suddenly: **75 TD**

Michigan essentially bookended the game with two 75-yard touchdown drives and produced very little in between. The official opener recap similarly noted that Michigan scored on its opening possession, struggled through the middle of the game and then won on the final 75-yard drive.

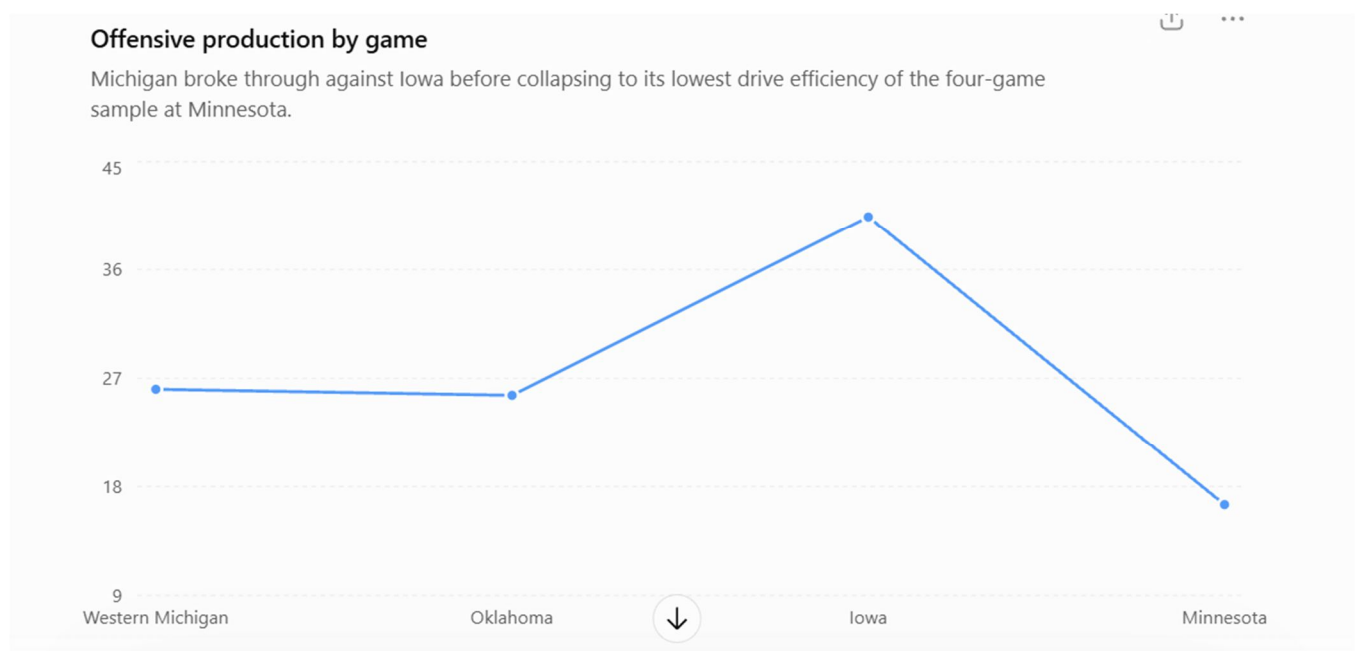
[University of Michigan Athletics](#)

5. There's no evidence of steady offensive improvement

The yards-per-drive progression is:

Offensive production by game

Michigan broke through against Iowa before collapsing to its lowest drive efficiency of the four-game sample at Minnesota.



That's not a normal upward developmental curve.

It's basically: **mediocre** → **mediocre** → **breakthrough** → **collapse**

Oklahoma is interesting because Michigan beat a strong opponent despite only generating 263 official yards and 14 first downs. Michigan was just 4-of-13 on third down, too. [Stats Archive](#)

So the 17 offensive points against Oklahoma shouldn't necessarily be interpreted as evidence that the offense was consistently functioning well.

6. Iowa showed the ceiling; Minnesota showed the floor

I'd separate the offense into two questions.

Can Michigan move the football? Yes. Iowa proves that. Michigan produced 429 official yards, 21 first downs and multiple long possessions. That's enough evidence that the personnel is capable of much better than what happened Saturday.

Can Michigan reliably move the football? So far, absolutely not.

That's the larger concern.

Across these 40 drives:

4.83 yards/play

27.2 yards/drive

25% scoring-drive rate

57.5% punt rate

32.5% of possessions last exactly three plays

And the most recent game was the worst offensive performance of the four.

My overall assessment

I'd grade the offense through these games around a **D+/C-**, with Iowa preventing it from being worse.

The biggest issue isn't simply "they aren't scoring enough." It's **drive-to-drive volatility**.

There are flashes of a genuinely dangerous offense — 75-yard TD, 91-yard TD, 89-yard TD, 75-yard TD — surrounded by an extraordinary number of possessions gaining almost nothing.

That means the offense currently feels **event-dependent rather than sustainable**. It needs a big play, advantageous field position, or one unusually successful possession rather than repeatedly creating first downs and building scoring opportunities.

And Minnesota makes the situation considerably more concerning because it came **immediately after the best offensive performance of the season**. Instead of Iowa becoming the beginning of an upward trend, Michigan fell from 429 official yards against Iowa to 180 against Minnesota.

The number I'd watch most closely against Penn State isn't even total yards or points: it's the number of 40+ yard drives. Iowa had six. Minnesota had zero. If Michigan starts producing four, five, six sustained drives per game, the offense is probably actually improving. If it's still relying on one or two isolated scoring possessions surrounded by punts, the underlying problem hasn't changed.

Appendix: Every Offensive Drive

vs Western Michigan (Sept. 5)

11-75 TD

4-17 Punt

3-2 Punt

3-6 Punt

3-1 Punt

5-25 INT

7-29 Punt

3-7 Punt

3-24 Fumble

6-75 TD

vs Oklahoma (Sept. 12, 2026)

9-35 Punt

6-91 TD

7-31 Punt

11-34 FG

3-8 Punt

11-33 Punt

3-4 Punt

2-6 TD

3-8 Punt

3-6 Punt

vs Iowa (Sept. 26)

7-15 Punt

9-89 TD

8-59 FG

10-62 Downs

3- -3 Punt

8-45 INT

11-43 FG

6-75 TD

5-12 Punt

3-7 Punt

at Minnesota (Oct. 3)

5-23 Punt

9-36 Punt

5-34 TD

3- -2 Punt

3- -3 Punt

2-5 INT

1-0 INT

9-33 Punt

4-2 Punt

8-37 Downs