

Commentary: Brommer sticks with Iowa, sees brighter days ahead

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

NORTH LIBERTY, Iowa – Shortly after Todd Lickliter was fired from his head-coaching position at Iowa, rumors of players transferring became rampant.

One of the players many Hawkeye fans believed would be leaving the team was forward Andrew Brommer, considering that he didn't start and wasn't someone many believed would pan out in the previous regime.

When Iowa lost in the Big Ten Tournament to Michigan last March in Indianapolis, we (the media) were given access to the Hawkeye locker room to talk to players. Knowing that these rumors existed, I went over to Brommer and asked him point blank if he envisioned himself staying at Iowa, regardless of what was about to happen. His reply that day was simply, "Yeah."

Nearly four months have passed since he told me he intended to stay at Iowa. On Sunday, Brommer's Prime Time League squad won its contest, 96-88, and his contributions were a big reason why. The Rosemount, Minn., native had 23 points and 11 rebounds in the game.

But look beyond those statistics, and it becomes obvious there's a difference in Brommer. He sees it, and more importantly, so do his Iowa teammates.

It wasn't that his teammates never trusted him before. But they now trust Brommer more than ever before, not just because

he decided to stick to his commitment and stay at Iowa, but because they see everything he does away from the hardwood to become a better player.

“Andrew has made great strides. I really want to commend him on being a man of his word, staying with his commitment, and sticking it out with us here at Iowa,” senior Jarryd Cole said. “It hasn’t been the easiest few years for him, but he has definitely done his part. Everything can only go up from here.

“We have a new coach coming in, a whole new fresh start coming in. Coach [Fran McCaffery] likes him, Andrew likes the system, and I think he’s going to fit really well here.”

The challenge for Brommer upon arriving at Iowa was mental. This initial weakness was magnified during his freshman year in a game at Boston College. Brommer missed two crucial free throws that would’ve sent the game to overtime, and instead, Iowa lost 57-55.

From that point on his freshman year, his playing time was limited, and his contributions didn’t prove to be much.

But if there was any sort of bright spot from this past year, a season that went down as one of the worst in Iowa’s history, it was with Brommer’s shooting at the free-throw line. After going an abysmal 5-of-22 from the charity stripe as a freshman, the 6-9 forward shot 75 percent from the line last season (18-of-24) and is now a 50 percent free-throw shooter for his career.

His improvements mentally, as well as physically, are things his teammates notice and appreciate about him. They believe that work ethic will eventually pay off for him.

“He does every rep, he runs hard, he conditions on his own, he’s always in the gym working on his game,” sophomore Cully Payne said. “It’s something I see as a point guard being like,

'OK, he's ready to play,' which gives me confidence in him, too."

Brommer could have chosen to leave. Considering what his teammates knew, none of them would have blamed him for doing so. He was one of four incoming freshmen that were members of Iowa's 2008 recruiting class. Two of those players – Anthony Tucker and Aaron Fuller – are no longer Hawkeyes, and Matt Gatens, like Brommer, also had to deal with rumors last March of transferring himself, an experience he described as "very annoying."

But instead, Brommer remained true to what he told me back in March, and what he told his teammates after last year's nightmare season concluded. Cole described what transpired with Brommer as though a gray cloud that once hovered over his head had now disappeared, and as a result, he had more freedom mentally.

"I think we all have been through a lot," Gatens said. "With me and him being in the same class, I think we experienced some similar things fighting all the rumors going around, and people leaving the past two years.

"I feel like he has done a good job of sticking it out and working hard. I think if you work hard and keep your head in it, you're going to see positive changes."

And now that Brommer has made that decision, he said his only goal now is to help Iowa start winning again.

"I'm going to do everything the coaches tell me, and above and beyond that," Brommer said. "I want to be a big part of this team, this year. I want this team to win.

"We haven't won the last two years, and I want to bring that tradition back to Iowa."