

Hawkeyes bounce back with ugly win over Warhawks

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – This might not have been how Fran McCaffery envisioned getting his first victory as Iowa men's basketball head coach, but nevertheless, win No. 1 did indeed happen as the Hawkeyes defeated Louisiana-Monroe 68-40 on Tuesday inside Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Iowa managed to win this game in convincing fashion despite having 22 turnovers and shooting a woeful 4-of-10 from the free-throw line. Although the Hawkeyes had moments of frustration, some that made McCaffery even lose a bit of his cool, they never trailed in this contest, and began to perform better as the game progressed.

"I think any time I'm frustrated with our execution... I was not frustrated with our effort," McCaffery said in his postgame press conference. "I think as a coach, if you feel like your team is battling, then I can be frustrated with our execution. We can take care of that.

"If they're not battling, then we've got a major problem. But they battled for me. They battled for me in both games."

Freshman forward Zach McCabe led the Hawkeyes in scoring with 12 points, and had four rebounds to go along with that. McCabe made two big 3-pointers for Iowa, allowing the Hawkeyes to build a commanding lead on the Warhawks early.

Louisiana-Monroe managed to trim the Iowa lead to four points before the Hawkeyes received a spark from junior walk-on Jordan Stoermer, who came in and scored seven points off the

bench and was actually the team's leading scorer at halftime when it was ahead 29-18.

While the Warhawks had opportunities to make the game close, they were constantly turning the basketball over, mainly because of travels. Eventually, Iowa began to figure things out offensively in the second half and built an advantage it just wasn't going to relinquish.

Not only were the Hawkeyes making progress at the offensive end, but they also did so at the defensive end of the floor, something sophomore Eric May and freshman Roy Devyn Marble both said was a key adjustment made at halftime.

"The zone press was really effective," May said about the adjustment Iowa made defensively. "It threw them out of sync, and along with that, our half-court defense was really good. Everybody was playing really well.

"It all started from defense, and the offense kind of came."

Iowa received a boost from its depth in this game, as the Hawkeye bench outscored the Warhawk bench by 20 points. In addition to Stoermer's seven points, Marble contributed to the cause with nine points.

One thing sophomore point guard Cully Payne said after the game he felt proved to be the difference against Louisiana-Monroe was that the team was more relaxed as opposed to playing a little tentative like the Hawkeyes did last weekend against South Dakota State.

"As soon as we lost, all the coaches talked to us for a long time about just being relaxed and just having fun," Payne said. "I think we did that tonight and we did a good job of it."

Now at 1-1, Iowa shifts its attention to playing three games in four-day span this weekend at the Paradise Jam in St.

Thomas, V.I. The Hawkeyes' first contest there will be Friday night against a Xavier squad that reached the Sweet 16 last season.

"We'll go down there and be hungry," McCaffery said. "We're playing what has been traditionally one of the best teams in the country in Xavier, who will challenge us in every way with their speed, with their guard play, with a seven-foot center. It's a team that sort of knows and understands how to win."