

Hawkeyes hold off Bengal rally for fourth win of season

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Despite an early second-half rally by Idaho State, the Iowa Hawkeyes managed to come away with a 70-53 victory over the Bengals on Saturday at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. The win puts Iowa back at 4-4 on the season after the Hawkeyes lost on Nov. 30 at Wake Forest.

Leading the way for Iowa was junior point guard Bryce Cartwright, who finished with team-highs of 15 points and eight assists. The performance by the 6-1 Hawkeye was one Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said was “outstanding,” even though it wasn’t one he felt was Cartwright’s best.

The Compton, Calif., native played 37 minutes for the Hawkeyes after being forced to sit out most of the first half against Wake Forest due to foul trouble.

“Today was much easier for me, and we got it done with a victory,” Cartwright said.

This was a game where like against the Demon Deacons, Iowa jumped out to an early lead, which at one time during the first half was a 26-point cushion for the Hawkeyes.

In the first half, Iowa shot 50 percent from the field (15-of-30), while playing suffocating defense and holding the Bengals to just 19 first half points on 7-of-21 shooting.

For the entire game, Idaho State committed a total of 23 turnovers.

"I thought our effort and energy level early was tremendous," McCaffery said. "There were a lot of people involved, and I thought down the stretch, we had some guys make some big plays, and that was good to see."

Iowa would take a 37-19 lead into the locker room, but 27-14 run by the Bengals would trim the Hawkeye advantage to 51-46 with a little over nine minutes remaining in the contest.

Like McCaffery, the players felt they went into a lull, allowing Idaho State to climb back in the game. What didn't help things for the Hawkeyes was struggles at the free-throw line, finishing 12-of-22 from the charity stripe.

Iowa would respond and ultimately seize control, moving back ahead by double-digits in the game's waning moments.

"We were getting lazy on defense, giving them a lot of space and a lot of room to make plays," sophomore forward Eric May said after finishing with 11 points and six rebounds. "Once we started making the lead bigger, we started locking down on defense."

Now at 4-4, the Hawkeyes look ahead to their upcoming in-state showdowns Northern Iowa, Iowa State, and Drake. The first contest from this trio is on Dec. 7 when the Panthers make the trek South on I-380 into Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Northern Iowa won last year's meeting in Cedar Falls, but one advantage the Hawkeyes may have is familiarity with the players, as they compete with one another in the Prime Time League every summer out in North Liberty.

"We don't know everything about them, but it is nice to have a good base of knowledge on their players," junior guard Matt Gatens said. "But we still have to pay attention to the [scouting report] because they'll come in here and they'll be ready to go."