

Hawkeyes collapse in second half, fall to Cyclones

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Losing is painful. Losing to a rival is even more aching.

In a season featuring plenty of growing pains, the Iowa Hawkeyes suffered one of those aching defeats at the hands of Iowa State on Friday, as the Cyclones left Carver-Hawkeye Arena with a 75-72 win. The victory moved Iowa State to 8-2 overall, while Iowa fell back to .500 at 5-5 on the season.

One of the biggest problems Iowa had on the evening was defensively matching up with Iowa State guard Scott Christopherson, who finished the contest with 30 points on 10-of-17 shooting, 7-of-12 from beyond the arc.

“It’s my fault. I’m not blaming anybody else. We wanted to do a better job on him,” Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said about his team’s plan to contain Christopherson. “We’ve seen him already make seven 3s in a game. You’d like to think that we would be better able to prohibit him from having a similar performance.

“But when it’s all said and done, I think you have to credit him. He made the shots and he made the plays, and we did not.”

After getting off to a lackadaisical start and falling behind 12-4 early, the Hawkeyes went on a big run in the first half, which was led by junior guard Matt Gatens. The Iowa City native carried over his late shooter’s touch against Northern Iowa into Friday’s contest, draining three open looks from 3-point range and having 11 points out of the gate for Iowa.

"I definitely felt a lot better than I had been," Gatens said. "The coaches were kind of mad I didn't shoot a couple of more times. I had open looks, and it's too bad. I could've made a few more, but I didn't feel like I had them."

As the first half progressed, the Hawkeyes would continue to dominate in front of a crowd of 13,260 spectators. Among the key contributors alongside Gatens, who had a team-high 15 points, were freshman forward Melsahn Basabe and junior forward Andrew Brommer.

Basabe nearly had a triple-double in the first half alone and finished with 12 points, 14 rebounds, and seven blocks. Meanwhile, Brommer gave Iowa a spark off the bench and scored 12 points on 6-of-7 shooting from the field, a performance he acknowledged was the best of his collegiate career.

"He's going to get his opportunities," senior center Jarryd Cole said about his Hawkeye teammate. "We're going to need him to capitalize. He did that tonight."

But the team's biggest woes this season came back again to cost them this game – dreadful play to start the second half when the Hawkeyes were winning by nine points, and shooting a mere 12-of-23 from the free-throw line, which included some crucial misses late in the contest when Iowa could have used them.

McCaffery again insisted after the game that free-throw shooting doesn't appear as a major problem in games because the team handles them so well during practice.

"I'd blame it on concentration, if anything," Cole said. "We're young, but I'm not one for mistakes. We just missed them."

Iowa now has the week here for the players to take their final exams, and for the coaches to instill fundamentals back into this team before the Hawkeyes head to Des Moines on Dec. 18 to

finish the set of in-state showdowns with a contest at Drake.

“We’ve got a ton of games coming really quickly, which I think is hard for a young team,” McCaffery said.