

# COMMENTARY: Hawkeyes' identity beginning to show itself (premium)

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*HawkeyeDrive.com*

DES MOINES, Iowa – Eleven games into the 2010-11 season, the Iowa Hawkeyes are a team that is slowly establishing an identity.

Maybe it's not in the mold of teams that win conference championships and routinely make appearances in the NCAA Tournament every March, but it's something that has become clearer with each game.

As head coach Fran McCaffery said following the Hawkeyes' 59-52 win over Drake on Saturday at the Knapp Center, this is still a team that lacks experience. Even though it was a game played within state boundaries, this was still a road win for this club, and one it desperately needed after losing at home last week to Iowa State.

For a young team like Iowa, it's a step in the right direction.

Overall, this program is moving along in a reasonable manner. The 14-0 run Iowa went on to start Saturday's game is a clear indicator of what the Hawkeyes are capable of on any given night, and there will be games where Iowa is completely outmatched, but shows enough grit to be there at the end.

The Hawkeyes have their flaws, part of which can be attributed to the lack of experience, and part of which is just not being at the level McCaffery was hoping it would reach at this juncture of the season.

Turnovers remain a problem. There have been some games where Iowa has done a decent job of keeping them in check. But not handling the basketball properly has allowed teams like Wake Forest, Iowa State, and even Drake to a certain extent to hang with the Hawkeyes.

Another thing that still needs fixing is free-throw shooting. On Saturday, it was better. While 68 percent from the foul line isn't saying much, it's still significant in contrast to what Iowa had been shooting in its previous three contests.

But the biggest problem appears to be strong second half starts. Once again, the Hawkeyes found themselves letting an opponent not just climb back into a game, but take a lead – Drake at one point held a 30-28 lead in the second half.

Against more superior squads, these second half runs Iowa seems to give up will be the ultimate demise. That's not to say Drake is a bad opponent, but compared the caliber of teams the Hawkeyes will be facing in the Big Ten, it's not as though the Bulldogs stack up well against the majority of the conference.

The younger players are continuing to get better, but like you see with most freshmen in Division-I sports, these guys are likely going to "hit a wall," and it might end up happening at an inopportune time for this team.

Once again, the following needs to be stressed because it just simply cannot be stressed enough – patience on the part of the fans, the boosters, alumni, etc., is important. The bar cannot be set at an absurd height. That's not to say this program won't be a legit contender soon (I think in the next 2-3 years, it will be). But right now, fans need to accept the growing pains that are eventually going to come this team's way.

Right now, I can't tell you how many conference games Iowa will win. I look at the first six Big Ten contests – vs.

Illinois, vs. Ohio State, at Purdue, vs. Northwestern, at Minnesota, at Ohio State – and wonder where a win is (if there even is one that could occur).

But the identity is slowly beginning to take form. It's not a bad identity at all. It's just one that unless absolute miracles are worked over the next few months, is going to need to be accepted right now.