

Hawkeyes edge Bulldogs for first road win

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

DES MOINES, Iowa – Road victories haven't come often for the Iowa Hawkeyes.

Before Iowa defeated Drake 59-52 at the Knapp Center on Saturday, the Hawkeyes had won a grand total of six road games in the past three seasons. In fact, Iowa had lost its last two games in the state capital.

With this victory, the Hawkeyes finished with a 2-1 record over the course of three consecutive games against in-state foes. More importantly for Iowa, it is now 6-5 with one final non-conference game remaining before the Big Ten portion of the schedule gets underway later this month.

"You can look at it as us just maturing before your eyes," senior center Jarryd Cole said. "We wanted it tonight. We wanted to win the game, and that's what we went out and did."

The Hawkeyes jumped out immediately to a 14-0 lead in the game's first five minutes before Drake finally knocked down a 3-pointer at the 14:08 mark in the first half.

From there though, it became a contest, as Iowa would only muster three more field goals the rest of the half, one of which was a last-second shot from junior guard Bryce Cartwright that gave the Hawkeyes a 24-19 halftime lead.

Like it had in some of its losses this season, Iowa was outplayed by Drake at the start of the second stanza, and the Bulldogs did eventually grab the lead, holding a 30-28 advantage.

With the game tied at 36-36 at the under-12 media timeout, the Hawkeyes slowly began to take over. Perhaps more significantly, the play of its three freshmen – forwards Melsahn Basabe and Zach McCabe and guard Roy Devyn Marble – ended up being the difference for Iowa.

Holding a 43-40 lead, Basabe finally managed to throw down a dunk in front of the Drake student section after missing one earlier in the game.

“It was pretty big,” Basabe said. “The team always gets excited about dunks. All through my career, any time I dunk, my team’s hyped, I’m hyped. It seems like it gets everybody rolling again.”

Then with Iowa leading 51-47, the shot clock was winding down as Marble hit an off-balance jumper that proved to be the game-deciding bucket.

“I knew the shot clock was winding down,” Marble said. “I got the ball, went to the top. I was looking for a ball screen, but I don’t think Jarryd or Mel knew what the shot clock was at the time, so I came off it.

“When I saw [Seth] VanDeest at 6-11 come out, I was like, ‘Aah. He’s going to block this, at least the first time.’ So I had to go up under his arm, and then shoot. But I knew it was going in. I’m just glad it went in.”

Finally, it was free-throw shooting. While not enormously better, Iowa did shoot better from the charity stripe, sinking 17-of-25 free-throw attempts. Between the three freshmen, they shot 13-of-17 from the foul line.

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery was certainly pleased with the way his younger guys were able to perform down the stretch in what proved to be a hostile environment, even with a mere 6,671 in attendance.

“To be on the road and hold on the way we did, and play the kind of defense we did and make enough shots, I think it was a great thing for our team,” McCaffery said.

Iowa plays its non-conference finale back at Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Dec. 21, hosting Louisiana Tech at 7 p.m. A live stream of the game can be found on the Big Ten Network’s web site. The conference opener comes on Dec. 29, when the Hawkeyes host Illinois.