

# Hawkeyes cap non-conference play with decisive victory

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – The Iowa Hawkeyes found a way to finish their non-conference slate on a strong note, brushing aside Louisiana Tech to the tune of 77-58 on Tuesday inside Carver-Hawkeye Arena. With this win, Iowa is now 7-5 overall and will enter Big Ten play next week possessing a winning record for the first time in two seasons.

The Hawkeyes were led once again by junior guard Matt Gatens, who had a game-high 22 points after coming off a 19-point performance last weekend against Drake. Gatens was one of four Iowa players in double-figures, with the others being sophomore Eric May, junior Bryce Cartwright and senior Jarryd Cole, who posted a double-double consisting of 10 points and 12 rebounds while battling illness.

“We had no idea if he was going to play,” Gatens said about Cole. “He missed shoot-around and the team dinner. It just shows what kind of character he has. It’s huge.”

Gatens, for the third straight game, was a catalyst for Iowa, as the Hawkeyes jumped out to an early lead. Most of the first half would be back and forth between the two clubs, and Iowa went into the locker room with a 35-34 halftime advantage despite having Cole and forwards Andrew Brommer and Zach McCabe all in foul trouble.

Meanwhile, freshman forward Melsahn Basabe, another player McCaffery mentioned as being sick prior to tip-off, was completely outplayed in the first half by the Bulldogs’ Olu Ashaolu. The 6-7 forward was named the WAC’s Player of the

Week before Tuesday's game and played like it, finishing with 18 points and 11 rebounds.

But Basabe would give the Hawkeyes a spark in the second half, scoring seven of the team's first 10 points after being shut out over the first 20 minutes. From there, Iowa would remain ahead until the clock struck 0:00.

"What we expected coming into this game against a talented offensive team like this is we were going to need everybody to come up big, and they did," Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said.

Cartwright wound up having one of the better games of his young Hawkeye career, as the point guard came away with 19 points, seven assists and six rebounds, all while committing only two turnovers in 37 minutes of action.

Statistically, the Compton, Calif., native acknowledged it was his best game statistically, but making this game even more meaningful to Cartwright was having his father in attendance.

"It means a lot to me," he said about having his family on hand. "Any family member, for them to come out here and take time out of their schedule, it means a lot."

Iowa now starts conference play next week, when No. 21 Illinois visits Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Dec. 29. Tip-off is scheduled for 8 p.m. Central, and the game will be aired nationally on the Big Ten Network.

As the Hawkeyes look ahead to their Big Ten slate, the opportunity is something that motivates the players, especially after coming off a successful end to their non-conference portion.

"I'm excited for it because there are a lot of good teams in the Big Ten," May said. "I'm excited to play those good teams. Every game is going to be a battle, which is what I'm looking

forward to.”