

# COMMENTARY: Lack of effort becoming a major concern (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – After leaving West Lafayette, Ind. 75-52 losers to Purdue on Jan. 9, the question was how the Iowa Hawkeyes would overcome what was clearly their worst performance of the 2010-11 season.

The answer came Wednesday night at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. That effort was backed up with another dreadful outing against Northwestern, one that saw the Wildcats leave with a 90-71 victory over Iowa. As a result, the Hawkeyes sit at 0-4 in the Big Ten.

The margin of defeat – 19 points – may have been less than what Iowa endured at Purdue. But there was more frustration coming out of this defeat. A lot more, in fact. And for good reason.

Northwestern came into this contest at 1-3 in conference play – the win came last weekend against the Big Ten's other 0-4 squad, Indiana. With four of the next five games for Iowa away from Carver-Hawkeye Arena, this contest against the Wildcats could have been viewed as a must-win, especially given the lackluster effort against the Boilermakers.

Early on, it seemed like the effort would be there for the Hawkeyes. Iowa jumped out to a 4-0 lead. Players such as forward Melsahn Basabe appeared to have a lot of energy out of the gate.

Then Northwestern hit 3-pointer after 3-pointer, and went into

halftime holding a 48-27 lead.

As awful as the Hawkeyes looked against Purdue, they were even worse against Northwestern, especially in the first half.

After the game, the message appeared to be the same from the top down – the effort wasn't there. Why it wouldn't be there is beyond me, but nevertheless, that was the message.

McCaffery was asked in his postgame press conference if he thought the effort was better against Northwestern than against Purdue. He gave a one-word answer: "No." It may only be his first season as Iowa's head coach, but I've been around him enough now to understand his demeanor.

There are times when he'll elaborate on something when answering questions, and then there are situations such as that where he is brief and to the point. The question was fair to ask. That's not the point. The point is when he just says "No" when answering that specific question, it's obvious how upset he was.

Same thing goes for the players. None of them called any teammates out publicly, but they also said not to place blame on the coaching staff. Senior center Jarryd Cole said there was no lack of preparation for this game. Junior guard Bryce Cartwright echoed those words. Basabe and junior guard Matt Gatens both agreed as well that the effort wasn't there on Wednesday.

When effort comes into question, that's a problem, period. A week ago, when Iowa nearly upset an Ohio State squad that will likely be No. 1 in the country now when the Hawkeyes visit Columbus, Ohio next week, effort wasn't questioned. Not in a five-point loss against one of the nation's best.

Now after the Hawkeyes have had two troubling defeats, effort shouldn't be a concern, but it is. With Iowa playing four of its next five on the road to finish the month of January, this

is a problem the Hawkeyes need to address, otherwise this season will only get worse for them.

If it isn't addressed soon, what took place Wednesday night might be a sign of things to come when Iowa plays teams like Minnesota, Ohio State, Penn State and Michigan – the four teams it will be playing away from Carver-Hawkeye Arena still this month.

It all seems simple. But the simplest things alone don't equate in success. That's why "effort" is an area that is in dire need of improvement. That's why it needs to be addressed now before more performances like the ones Cartwright and Gatens had on Wednesday (and the whole season for that matter) go to waste.