

COMMENTARY: Iowa just as convincing in win as MSU in loss (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – The Iowa Hawkeyes undoubtedly secured their biggest win of the 2010-11 season on Wednesday, defeating the Michigan State Spartans, 72-52. What made it so significant though wasn't just that Iowa won, but how it won.

A lot of talk after this contest is going to be centered around the downfall of Michigan State, a team that came into this season not only picked to win the Big Ten, but ranked second nationally. Make no mistake, the Spartans looked flat from the start and head coach Tom Izzo even went as far as saying it was the worst loss he could remember as Michigan State's head coach.

But what won't be talked about enough is what the Hawkeyes were actually able to do on this night. For as bad as the Spartans looked for 40 minutes, Iowa was just as aggressive.

Yes, Michigan State shot an abysmal 19-of-56, but part of that was the Hawkeyes' success at the defensive end of the floor, a phase of the game Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said was preached throughout Iowa's practice on Monday after relinquishing 87 points at Michigan last weekend.

As for the offensive production, the Hawkeyes shot 30-of-52, which is usually going to win you plenty of games (it certainly has for some of Iowa's opponents this season). One player in particular who really stood out here was senior center Jarryd Cole. Not only did he shoot a perfect 6-of-6

from the floor, coming away with 13 points, but he also came up one rebound shy of a double-double.

Going beyond the stats, Cole's performance was even more significant when you consider that freshman forward Melsahn Basabe was virtually a non-factor with only four points and three rebounds after a 25-point outing against Michigan just three days earlier.

Another sign of encouragement for the Hawkeyes was sophomore forward Eric May. The Dubuque native was basically non-existent in Iowa's previous two contests. Against Michigan State, he not only broke out of his funk by scoring 11 points, but he made two huge plays in the second half to keep momentum with the Hawkeyes.

The first came when Michigan State played its best basketball of the evening. May got back on defense following an Iowa turnover and rejected a Spartan shot, and in essence, puncturing whatever flesh wound the Hawkeyes had at that moment.

Then came his slam dunk that made the score 70-47, Iowa. The thunderous jam brought every fan inside Carver-Hawkeye Arena to its feet and when that moment happened, that was the dagger. It became fairly obvious at that point Iowa would prevail on this night.

I personally don't believe too much should be read into this Hawkeye win, other than simply giving credit where credit's due. Michigan State might not be playing like an NCAA Tournament team right now (it sure as heck isn't looking like the team with two consecutive Final Four appearances to its name), but for 40 minutes, on this night, Iowa did just about everything right and was rightly rewarded.

Whether the Hawkeyes build upon this remains to be seen, but Wednesday was clearly a glimpse into what could be when everything clicks for Iowa. That is what it will take for

Carver-Hawkeye Arena to have similar atmospheres like the one Wednesday and more importantly, keep fans believing that the program can indeed be turned around.