

Hawkeyes win with ease over Spartans

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Fran McCaffery called it the most complete game his team had played all season.

From practically start to finish, the Iowa Hawkeyes completely dominated a beaten-down Michigan State squad and emerged with a convincing 72-52 win over the Spartans on Wednesday at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. The victory moves Iowa up to 2-8 in the Big Ten and 9-13 overall.

“These kids needed a win like this tonight to show that they could put it all together,” McCaffery said. “It’s a confidence-builder, and I think it’s a way for us to continue to improve and continue to gain confidence as we move forward.”

The Hawkeyes set a tone right away, jumping out to a commanding 15-2 lead. Helping lead the way for Iowa was junior guard Matt Gatens, who finished with a game-high 19 points on 6-of-11 shooting.

The Iowa City native also reached the 1,000 career point milestone in the second half after connecting on three straight free throws.

“It’s a mark to keep track of, and it’s good to be a part of those names,” Gatens said after becoming the 40th Iowa men’s basketball player to reach the 1,000-point plateau for his career. “It’s a proud moment.”

Gatens wasn’t the only big contributor for the Hawkeyes though. Three other starters – senior center Jarryd Cole,

junior guard Bryce Cartwright, and sophomore forward Eric May – all had double-digit scoring efforts as well. Cole finished perfect from the floor shooting 6-of-6 and had 13 points along with nine rebounds. May came away with 11 points after being shut down the previous two contests.

Cartwright came away with a double-double for Iowa, finishing with 12 points and a career-high 10 assists.

“We were in control for most of the game, and we need to have more performances like that,” Cartwright said.

Eventually, the lead would expand from 15-2, to 20-6, to even 30-8 in favor of the Hawkeyes at one point in the first half. While Iowa caught fire shooting, Michigan State was ice cold in the first 20-minute stanza, shooting 7-of-29 from the floor and missing on all nine 3-point attempts.

After the Hawkeyes’ 87-73 loss at Michigan on Jan. 30, McCaffery took the Hawkeyes’ practice the following day and made it specifically about defense, adding that preparation for the Spartans was pushed back a day later than normal preparation for an opponent would be for Iowa.

“What we did on Monday was break down every aspect of our defense like it was the first day of practice,” McCaffery said. “We introduced them one day before and just focused on a defensive practice, because anything short of that, it didn’t matter what the game plan was. We’ve got to be able to stop somebody.”

Iowa returns to the road again this weekend, traveling to Bloomington, Ind., to face the Indiana Hoosiers. The Hawkeyes won the first meeting back on Jan. 23 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, 91-77, but Indiana has since won two of three at home over Illinois and Minnesota, with the one loss coming by a point in overtime at Michigan State.

The game is scheduled for 3 p.m. Central on Feb. 5, and it

will be aired nationally on ESPN2.

"We got to forget this game... remember it, but forget at the same time," Cole said. "Remember how you did it, but forget it because it's in the past now. We have to look forward and get on the road and beat an Indiana team that is playing as well as anybody right now."