

COMMENTARY: Nothing to be ashamed of here (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – As expected, disappointment was displayed within the Iowa men's basketball program after the Hawkeyes were handed a gut-wrenching 62-59 loss in overtime to No. 13 Wisconsin on Wednesday. As expected, fans left Carver-Hawkeye Arena disappointed to see Iowa lose a contest it spent the majority of in command.

To be completely honest, I really don't know what more the Hawkeyes could have done.

Certainly, many will pinpoint to the Badgers' ability to haul in 16 offensive rebounds, 12 of which came in a first half where Wisconsin shot 6-of-33. That's not a misprint – 6-of-33. Some of those missed shots, the Badgers had open looks that just didn't connect. Some of that ought to be attributed to solid defense from Iowa.

In fact, here's a thought to consider as far as the Hawkeyes' defensive play is concerned – Wisconsin's Jordan Taylor came in as arguably one of the top point guards in the country, leading the nation with a 3.88 assist-to-turnover ratio. He also came in averaging 17 points per game for the Badgers.

He finished with 16 points and eight assists, but a lot of those points came in the second half and overtime. In the first half, Wisconsin had zero points on the fast break, and despite outrebounding the Hawkeyes throughout the game at both ends, the Badgers didn't have any second chance points in the first half, either.

Staying on point, though, I felt Iowa did more than enough and had more than enough going for it in terms of being able to pull off this upset. Although the lead was only five points at halftime, the Hawkeyes did play the bulk of this game from ahead. Even when Wisconsin finally took the lead in the second half, that was when Iowa went on a run and was leading at one point in the second half, 49-43.

The game would be tied at 51-51 before junior guard Matt Gatens drew a foul and sank two free throws. That's something you want to see a player of his caliber doing late in games – putting his team in a position to win like that.

Same thing can be said for the shot taken by junior guard Bryce Cartwright at the end of regulation. Freshman forward Melsahn Basabe said after the game that the play called at that moment was the exact same play that was called at Indiana last weekend when Cartwright hit the game-winning shot to defeat the Hoosiers.

Like in that Indiana game, Cartwright got an open look and took a good shot, a shot any coach would want his star player taking at that moment.

I understand the Hawkeyes aren't going to accept moral victories, and I'm not necessarily calling this a moral victory, either. My point here is that Iowa had its chances, many of them in fact, to secure what would've been a monumental win for McCaffery and the entire program.

Even though the Hawkeyes didn't win this game, there really isn't a whole lot to be ashamed of here. It's not like Wisconsin is some less than mediocre squad. The Badgers own a tiebreaker for second place in the conference on No. 14 Purdue at the moment. You knew at some point, things would start shifting in Wisconsin's direction, and that's exactly what occurred.

As for Iowa, plenty of these opportunities will continue to

come. It would be foolish to think otherwise at this point.