

# Hawkeyes unravel, fall to Gophers

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – At one point in Sunday's contest, the Iowa Hawkeyes were ahead 14-6. The 12,759 on hand at Carver-Hawkeye Arena made it as loud an atmosphere as there might have been all season. It appeared Iowa would secure a big win over a reeling Minnesota squad.

But the Hawkeyes unraveled, and once they fell behind, they just couldn't recover.

Instead, it was the Golden Gophers walking off the hardwood with a 62-45 win, dropping Iowa to 3-10 in Big Ten play, and 10-15 overall.

The Hawkeyes lost this game thanks in large part to shooting 6-for-28 from 3-point range against a Minnesota team determined to stifle Iowa with its 2-3 zone the entire 40 minutes. Inside, the Golden Gophers started 6-8 forward Trevor Mbakwe, 6-10 center Colton Iverson, and 6-11 forward Ralph Sampson III.

"We anticipated seeing a lot of zone with a big lineup," Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said. "We knew we were going to see it. We worked on it. Doesn't look like it, but we worked on it a lot.

"To be honest with you, at times, our execution wasn't that bad. We just couldn't get anything to go down."

It began with Minnesota jumping out to a 6-3 lead before the Hawkeyes went on an 11-0 run that seemed to rattle the Golden Gophers early on. In fact, Iowa's play early on was something

that was pleasing McCaffery.

But Minnesota would respond with a 10-0 run of its own to retake the lead, and then the Golden Gophers continued to build their lead while the Hawkeyes didn't have an answer.

That trend would carry over into the second half. Minnesota climbed to as big of a lead as 22 points, thanks in large part to Mbakwe scoring 22 of his game-high 24 points during the game's final stanza.

"In the first half, we weren't shooting it that great, and it kind of carried over," junior guard Matt Gatens said. "They stayed in the zone, and we knew they were going to do that. Our confidence was just shot. I don't know why.

"We've had some guys that had been shooting it well lately, and it's too bad, because we were getting open looks."

Iowa was led by junior guard Bryce Cartwright, who finished with 11 points and seven assists, both of which were team-highs. Senior center Jarryd Cole had eight points and eight rebounds, and freshman guard Devyn Marble finished with seven points coming off the bench.

In addition to the Hawkeyes shooting 16-of-47 from the floor, Iowa also had the task of defending Minnesota's bigs with freshman forward Melsahn Basabe being a non-factor due to foul trouble (Basabe fouled out with 3:31 left) and without the services of junior forward Devon Archie, who missed his second straight game due to a concussion.

As a result, the Golden Gophers were able to put together a 34-14 edge in the paint, as well as 20 points off 17 Hawkeye turnovers.

"When you have very few bigs that aren't capable of playing, it's kind of hard to run our system because we run so much," Cole said. "I think it hurt us quite a bit."

Iowa will be off until Feb. 17, when the Hawkeyes travel to Evanston, Ill., to play Northwestern, who fell to 4-9 in conference play after a 65-41 loss at Penn State on Sunday. The Wildcats won the first meeting between these two teams 90-71 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena back on Jan. 12. This contest starts at 8 p.m. Central and will be aired nationally on the Big Ten Network.