

# COMMENTARY: One problem resurfaces, another continues (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

EAST LANSING, Mich. – If Iowa's loss at Illinois last weekend felt like something we've all seen before, the Hawkeyes losing 85-66 to Michigan State on Wednesday at the Breslin Center was a slight bit different.

Sometimes as a reporter, I tend to over-analyze statistics and the box scores a little bit more than I should. But there were two glaring stats from Wednesday's game that can't be overlooked.

From the free-throw line, Iowa shot 20-of-33. From 3-point range, the Hawkeyes missed all 12 of their attempts.

Let me repeat – 20-of-33, 0-of-12.

Ouch.

Now before I address these two things, let me say what I feel they have in common – the problems Iowa had in these two areas have to be mental. The reason why I say this is simple – the Hawkeyes are a Big Ten team. The guys on this roster are Division-I players, and they wouldn't be if they couldn't shoot the basketball.

Regarding the free throws, this is something that has come up at times in a few of Iowa's losses this season. But keep in mind the Hawkeyes got 33 attempts from the stripe on Wednesday. Iowa shot 6-of-8 in the first half, and the game was relatively close. The Hawkeyes were 14-of-25 in the second

half, and that's when the Spartans began to take control.

Shooting less than 70 percent as Iowa did just doesn't do it, especially against a team like Michigan State that's playing for its NCAA tournament lives. The Hawkeyes had their chances here to stay in the game with the Spartans picking up fouls left and right, and they just couldn't take advantage.

What has to make it even more frustrating for the players, coaches and fans is that some of these misses were coming from players that have done well at the line this season. For example, freshman forward Melsahn Basabe was 1-of-5. Senior center Jarryd Cole was 2-of-5.

My intent here isn't to single these two guys out because both of them played well on Wednesday and not everyone has a great night with foul shooting. My point here is when both of them are off on the same night, and no one else is faring that much better, then problems simply arise.

Now let's turn our attention to the 3-point shooting. The statistical anomaly here is the 0-for-12. Very rarely do you ever see a basketball game where one team is unable to make a single shot from behind the arc. Simply put, 0-for-12 is rare.

What isn't rare, however, is that this isn't something new with the Hawkeyes. Iowa has lost six straight games, and in that six-game span, the Hawkeyes have shot a combined total of just 19-of-93 from the 3-point line. I repeat: 19-of-93. Heck, even in Iowa's last victory, which was Feb. 5 at Indiana, it shot just 2-of-9 from behind the arc.

And only one of those six losses (against Northwestern) had Iowa shooting above 40 percent, going 5-of-12 in that game.

If the Hawkeyes are 5-of-12 in this contest against Michigan State, and make five of the 13 free throws they missed, that's 20 more points. Iowa lost by 19.

Amazing, huh?

Again, I believe it's mental. Not just because o-for-12 just doesn't happen, but because it's hard for anyone to keep their head in a game when nothing is falling for them and the deficit grows bigger and bigger.

These two areas aren't just things that will be instantly fixed before the Hawkeyes' regular season finale against No. 6 Purdue or before the Big Ten Tournament next week.

The season isn't officially over, but when Iowa is finally able to organize its offseason, shooting in general has to be at the top of the list of priorities. That, and the players working on their mental psyche so that way they don't face nights like this again.