

Spartans surge past Hawkeyes with dominant second half

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Exactly one month following an 20-point Iowa victory over Michigan State at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, the script nearly flipped on Wednesday.

The Hawkeyes struggled shooting, and the Spartans had a “Senior Night” to remember as Michigan State emerged victorious 85-66 over Iowa at the Breslin Center, a place the Hawkeyes haven’t won at since 1993. This defeat puts Iowa at 10-19 overall and 3-14 in the Big Ten with one regular season game remaining before the Big Ten Tournament next week.

Early on, the Hawkeyes looked to be in control, jumping out to an 8-5 lead at the under-16 timeout of the first half. But the Spartans would take the lead thanks in large part to a crucial 12-2 run, and the game would become closely contested.

Michigan State took a 36-32 lead into halftime, then Iowa simply began to unravel. The Spartans scored 49 points in the second half on 15-of-28 shooting, while the Hawkeyes continue to miss opportunities to climb back into the game.

“I thought our ball-screen defense in the second half was horrendous,” Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said. “That’s my fault. That’s not their fault. Maybe I could have subbed a little bit more.

“I played my key guys major minutes.”

Iowa finished shooting just 23-of-56 from the floor, including 0-of-12 from 3-point range. McCaffery said afterwards that he thought the Hawkeyes were getting good looks from behind the

arc and that the shots weren't falling for Iowa like they were for Michigan State.

"They're going to go in eventually, but not tonight," junior guard Bryce Cartwright said.

Another area of concern for the Hawkeyes was shooting from the free-throw line. Although Iowa shot 6-of-8 from the charity stripe in the first half, a 14-of-25 effort in the second 20-minute stanza proved to be fatal.

"We're shooting our free throws throughout practice, and I figure we should make them," senior center Jarryd Cole said. "It's a shame. It's hurt that you can't cash out on free points like that. We have to make that change."

Leading the way for the Hawkeyes in scoring were freshman forward Melsahn Basabe and junior guard Matt Gatens, both of whom had 13 points. Cartwright finished with 11 points and a team-high six assists, while senior center Cole had 10 points, six rebounds, and a team-high five steals.

As for Michigan State, it was led by guard Keith Appling, who scored a team-high 18 points off the bench. Meanwhile, guard Kalin Lucas had 17 points and six assists and forward Draymond Green had 12 points, eight rebounds, and five assists for the Spartans.

Iowa will play its final regular season game on March 5 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena against No. 6 Purdue, a contest that tips off at 3 p.m. Central and will be aired nationally on ESPN. The Boilermakers won the first meeting in West Lafayette, Ind., on Jan. 9 by a 75-52 score over the Hawkeyes.

"We got to play harder," Basabe said. "There's no reason why we couldn't have beat Purdue [last time]. We can compete with Purdue, as well as anybody, as long as we play hard. It's just up to us to give the effort."

Iowa could already know its seeding for next week's Big Ten Tournament beforehand. Should Indiana lose its final two games to No. 10 Wisconsin on Thursday and at Illinois on March 5, the Hawkeyes would be locked into the No. 10 seed thanks to winning both games over the Hoosiers this season.