

COMMENTARY: Brommer will be needed (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – This was supposed to be Andrew Brommer's night.

The 6-9 forward was the center of a bobblehead promotion (the first of four this season) for the Iowa Hawkeyes' contest Monday night against North Carolina A&T. This was also Brommer's first game back on the court for Iowa after missing the past month with a knee sprain that could have been much more severe.

Brommer played a total of six minutes and finished and had two points and five rebounds before re-aggravating the same knee during the second half of the Hawkeyes' 95-79 win Monday. Head coach Fran McCaffery said afterwards that Brommer would be day-to-day. Again, Iowa may have caught a break that the injury wasn't worse.

Putting the statistics from Monday's game aside though, one thing did become clear to me – the importance of Brommer's role on this year's squad. The Hawkeyes are going to need him and need him to be productive this season if they're going to have any chance of moving away from the Big Ten's cellar.

Yes, he might have a reputation for picking up bad fouls, and he had three of them in this game. But breaking down his three fouls, the last two were awful calls that most players are able to get away with. Being critical of him based on being in foul trouble, at least on this night, is being short-sighted.

The reason why Brommer is so important to this team has to do

with depth. Devon Archie, who has started the last two games at center, had six rebounds Monday night but didn't score. Freshman Gabe Olaseni never saw the court. These are the two guys Brommer is competing with at the 5.

Make no mistake. Brommer would be starting Iowa's next game Nov. 17 against Northern Illinois had he not re-aggravated his knee injury. Heck, had he not sprained his knee in the first place when practices started, Brommer would have been starting from Day One. Not because Archie hasn't gotten better, but because this was who McCaffery wanted to see emerge at that position on the court.

Even if Brommer only gives Iowa 15 minutes a game, if he can score between 6-8 points and post about 4-5 rebounds per contest, he's playing his role. The Hawkeyes have enough depth at other spots on the court that they don't need him to post monster numbers on a consistent basis. He has the size, he has the skill set, and he has the trust of his teammates.

You want to know why Brommer's important to this Hawkeye squad? Because he and fellow senior Matt Gatens both opted to stay the course after things spiraled out of control and the transition from Todd Lickliter to McCaffery was taking place. McCaffery spoke more highly of him halfway through last season than Lickliter did the entire two years he coached Brommer.

He's a glue guy. Without him, opposing teams would just constantly attack Iowa in the paint. Even Chicago State at one point in that game Nov. 11 had all of its points coming inside (and this was well into the second half, mind you). With him, he gives the Hawkeyes a body that can attack the glass (assuming he doesn't get called for touch fouls like he was Monday) and his size can force opposing players into poor shot selection.

Again, this isn't to say neither Archie nor Olaseni can do this, but Brommer has the longevity and as I mentioned before,

was the guy being looked at as the replacement to Jarryd Cole in the starting lineup.

Everything I'm saying here will become more evident as the season progresses and Brommer starts to get more minutes because he's starting on a regular basis as opposed to coming off the bench and being very limited in the amount of time he's on the court.