

# COMMENTARY: Ongoing struggles lead to low point (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – After losing three of its last four games, it's safe to say the low point thus far of the Fran McCaffery era is ongoing. Iowa's 71-55 loss to Clemson in the Big Ten/ACC Challenge on Tuesday was a combination of everything becoming discombobulated at once, and the end result left plenty to be desired by those on hand at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

In fact, all three of the Hawkeyes' losses thus far have had the same disturbing trend to them of teams jumping out to big leads in the first half and never finding themselves in a position to fully recover.

But focusing specifically on what happened Tuesday, the whole contest was a mess for head coach Fran McCaffery and his squad. Iowa shot 16-of-56 from the floor and compiled only five assists the entire game. Again, 16-of-56. That's an awful shooting percentage that would have been more associated with a loss during the previous coaching regime.

It wasn't just the offense that looked like a train wreck, however. The bigger issue with this team right now is its play defensively. Clemson scored at will Tuesday night. But it's not just Clemson.

Campbell before that, and Creighton before that, both were unconscious shooting against Iowa in those two games the Hawkeyes lost prior to this defeat at the hands of Clemson. Two things make this even more staggering. One is that this was an issue Iowa had last season that doesn't look to have been fully resolved.

Two, and this is the bigger issue as it pertains to this season, is that it's not one position that has been a weakness defensively. The poor play has been a collective effort. Opposing teams have had as much success in the paint as they've had mid-range or from behind the arc.

Many will look at Clemson shooting over 50 percent from 3-point range, and perhaps rightfully so because Iowa's perimeter defense has been porous. But the Tigers also scored 30 points in the paint and they dominated the boards, outrebounding the Hawkeyes, 42-27.

Even in some of the games Iowa has won this season, these have been glaring concerns with this team that don't look to be going away anytime soon. If these issues still continue, it's going to be a long season in Iowa City.

Now the question becomes what can be done? I suppose McCaffery can make some lineup changes, but how much of a difference is taking out Eric May for Josh Oglesby, for example, going to make in the long run? Oglesby has proven to be consistent thus far, but he's also a freshman that's still going to have a couple more off nights (assuming the law of averages are in play here). It's not to say this sort of move can't work, but it's not a move that's going to instantly make Iowa a better team.

Right now, the Hawkeyes are what they are. Iowa's a 4-3 team that has looked as bad as a team could look in the three games it has lost, and more of these losses look like they'll be on the horizon even if minor tweaks continue to get made.

But make no mistake, this is the low point of the McCaffery era. Players that are being counted on have been regressing, and that's the last thing a team like Iowa can afford to have take place before entering Big Ten play. Improvement can still be made and it's still a long season, but a lot of improvement needs to happen, and it won't happen overnight.