

Hawkeyes escape with upset of Gophers

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Four days after putting together a 72-65 victory at Wisconsin that might be considered Iowa's biggest win under head coach Fran McCaffery, the Hawkeyes found a way to sustain that success into an even more significant feat.

Despite porous free-throw shooting down the stretch that nearly lost Iowa its game against Minnesota on Wednesday, the Hawkeyes still managed to escape Williams Arena with a 64-62 win over the Golden Gophers to improve to 10-6 overall and 2-1 in the Big Ten. By emerging victorious, Iowa now has its first winning streak in road Big Ten games since the 2006-07 season, which was Steve Alford's final season in Iowa City.

Early on, it appeared Minnesota would run away with this one. Thanks in part to some solid mid-range jump shooting, the Golden Gophers held a 32-21 with 5:06 left in the first half when McCaffery called Iowa's first timeout.

At that moment, the complexion of the game completely changed.

"I challenged them to be more aggressive defensively," McCaffery said. "They were scoring pretty easily. They were scoring quickly and easily.

"We shifted to the zone at that point, and we challenged them to keep the ball in front of us, rebound and run. That's pretty much what we did."

The Hawkeyes, in that final 5:06 of the first half, outscored Minnesota 10-0 and cut its deficit down to 32-31 at halftime after a steal by senior forward Devon Archie led to a lay-up

by freshman forward Aaron White in the closing seconds.

In the second half, the momentum carried over for Iowa. Sophomore forward Zach McCabe broke a 38-38 tie with a bucket that ultimately gave Iowa a lead it wouldn't relinquish the rest of the evening. But during a stretch where the Hawkeyes went from trailing 32-23 to ahead 48-42 in the second half, senior guard Matt Gatens took over by scoring 17 of those 25 Iowa points. Gatens ended up finishing with 19 points on the evening.

"He was spectacular," McCaffery said. "He was all over all the place defensively on the glass. When we were struggling offensively late in the first half, he banks two 3s in a row. That really, I think, propelled us."

Gatens was one of three Hawkeyes to score in double-figures. Also reaching the mark were McCabe and White. McCabe finished with 12 points and a team-high seven rebounds, while White came off the bench and provided 10 points and six boards.

And while Marble was held scoreless for most of the second half, his play at both ends of the court helped propel the Hawkeye comeback. When he did finally score in the second half, it was a transition lay-up off a Golden Gopher turnover that put Iowa ahead 63-55.

"He's a long, active guard, so at the top of the zone, he was doing a great job," Gatens said of Marble's efforts. "We did a great job with the zone. Then he took care of the ball."

One thing working in Iowa's favor in the closing minutes was that the Hawkeyes had fouls to give. After Minnesota's Rodney Williams missed the front end of a one-and-one following the seventh foul committed by Iowa in the second half, a Golden Gopher putback cut the Hawkeye lead to 64-62. Marble would go to the line and miss both of his free-throw attempts – Iowa finished 14-of-24 from the charity stripe – and Minnesota had one last chance to either tie or win the game.

However, a last-second floater by Minnesota's Maverick Ahanmisi came up short, and the Hawkeyes managed to survive.

"I got a little nervous that maybe it was going to go in. Luckily, it didn't," McCabe said. "We probably should have came out with a 10-point win, but we only came out two. But a win's a win."

Now at 2-1 in Big Ten, Iowa returns home for the first of three straight against ranked opponents when No. 6 Ohio State visits Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Jan. 7. The Buckeyes enter with an identical 2-1 conference mark following a 71-40 win over Nebraska on Jan. 3. Iowa's game against Ohio State is set to start at 2 p.m. Central and will be televised nationally on the Big Ten Network.