

COMMENTARY: Running into a buzz saw (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – On a day where the question being asked was whether Iowa had turned the corner under head coach Fran McCaffery, the Hawkeyes found themselves pummeled at both ends of the court by No. 6 Ohio State, as the Buckeyes emerged with a convincing 76-47 win.

Iowa saw its two-game winning streak snapped in a humiliating manner, as 15,400 spectators filed into Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Saturday to watch a team that had a winning record in Big Ten play for the first time in five years.

But as bad as this loss was, – and boy, was it ugly – the Hawkeyes ran into a buzz saw Saturday.

It's hard for me to sit here and conjure up a litany of reasons for why Iowa played as bad as it did when the 29-point home loss it just received came at the hands of a team like Ohio State. The Buckeyes have won the Big Ten each of the past two seasons and on Saturday, they looked like a squad poised to make it three straight.

The Hawkeyes' game plan was pretty simple – they wanted to limit the touches for Ohio State's Jared Sullinger and not let him be the one who beat them. But that's exactly what happened. Sullinger had 28 points and eight rebounds, and he shot 13-of-18 from the floor. Ohio State's offense is based around him, and when he goes off like that, the Buckeyes are almost impossible to beat.

Now don't get me wrong here. Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery,

his assistants, and all of the players ought to be slightly alarmed by some of what took place on Saturday. For one thing, the Hawkeyes' leading scorer was junior forward Eric May, who had nine points. The problem isn't May being the leading scorer, but that no one reached double figures in points.

Iowa was going to need efforts similar to what it had against Wisconsin and Minnesota in order to win. Not necessarily have players do more than what's expected of them, but to at least show some productivity that in turn would allow the Hawkeyes to hang around long enough to possibly pull off the upset. Those efforts didn't come on Saturday.

The fact that Iowa finished with more turnovers (20) than field goal attempts made (17) is quite staggering. It doesn't matter who the opponent is when those are the numbers. With that kind of ratio, very rarely (if ever) do teams overcome that to win a game.

But again, the Hawkeyes only coming away with 47 points had as much to do with who they were playing as it did anything else. They caught Ohio State at a time where the Buckeyes, who had just fallen four spots in the top 25 following a loss to Indiana, laid a 71-40 massacre at home on lowly Nebraska.

Another thing the Buckeyes did was get in a rhythm shooting, particularly at the start of the second half. After shooting just 2-of-7 from 3-point range in the first half, Ohio State made its first three 3-point attempts of the second half, and that was when the Buckeyes began to really separate themselves.

The road doesn't get any easier for Iowa having to play both Michigan State and Michigan next week, but there's plenty that can be taken away from going up against a powerhouse like Ohio State, a team the Hawkeyes won't have to worry about seeing again this season unless they meet in the Big Ten Tournament next March. This loss shouldn't feel like the end of the world

to fans, even those who made their first trek to Carver-Hawkeye Arena in 5-plus years.

This defeat was simply a dose of reality. Right now, Ohio State's a much better team. If the Hawkeyes are going to close the gap anytime soon, at least now they know just how wide that gap is.