

Hawkeyes buried by sixth-ranked Buckeyes

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Fran McCaffery knew his team had a tall task on Saturday, but even he didn't expect to get "blitzed" by Ohio State.

Despite a crowd of 15,400 on hand, the Hawkeyes unraveled and saw their two-game winning streak evaporate after the sixth-ranked Buckeyes left Carver-Hawkeye Arena with a 76-47 victory. Iowa fell to 2-2 in the Big Ten and 10-7 overall as a result of the loss.

Before this game got completely out of hand, what doomed the Hawkeyes was shooting a meager 5-of-23 from the floor in the first half and committing 12 turnovers to only one assist. All this despite only being down by nine points at halftime.

"They took us out of some stuff and we rushed our shots," McCaffery said. "We short-armed some shots. We had multiple, I think, transition opportunities where we could get to the rim, and didn't really have much to show for it."

After freshman forward Aaron White tied the game at 9-9, Ohio State went on a 9-0 run, forcing Iowa to use its first timeout. The Hawkeyes would trim the deficit down to five before the Buckeyes pushed their lead back up to 28-19 when both teams went to the locker rooms.

Exerting himself in that first half was Ohio State sophomore Jared Sullinger. The 6-8 forward finished with 28 points and eight rebounds, with 15 of those points coming on 7-of-9 shooting in the first half.

Not being able to keep the dominant Buckeye big man in check was part of what made the loss discouraging from Iowa's perspective.

"He's a tough player to guard," junior forward Eric May said. "It is tough that that's your game plan, and he comes and has a night like tonight. If anything, we just wish we would've slowed him down a little bit and got him uncomfortable, at least."

Then came the second half, when Ohio State began to exert itself. The Buckeyes scored five points to move its lead up to 33-19 when McCaffery called a 30-second timeout. From there, Iowa just couldn't catch up.

What became a 40-27 lead quickly expanded to 50-29 when McCaffery was called for a technical foul, then continued to balloon to the 29-point deficit it ultimately finished as.

"It's disappointing that we didn't come out with a better fight against one of the top teams in the country," senior guard Matt Gatens said.

No one on the Hawkeyes reached double-figures scoring, but May led the way both scoring and rebounding with nine points and six boards. Iowa as a team shot 17-of-53 from the floor, while committing a total of 20 turnovers.

"We got their best shot today," McCaffery said.

The Hawkeyes head back on the road for their next game on Jan. 10, as they'll look for their first win at Michigan State in 19 years. The 10th-ranked Spartans are currently on their first bye following an overtime victory over No. 18 Wisconsin on Jan. 3. Iowa and Michigan State met three times last season, with the two teams splitting at home before the Spartans knocked the Hawkeyes out of the first round of last year's Big Ten Tournament.

Tip-off from the Breslin Center in East Lansing, Mich., is set for 6 p.m. Central, and the game will be aired nationally on the Big Ten Network.