

Hawkeyes fall short against Nittany Lions

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. – A disastrous first half. Being short-handed. Missing critical free throws. Dumb luck.

For all the adversity facing the Iowa Hawkeyes on Thursday, they nearly overcame these obstacles and almost left Bryce Jordan Center with a come-from-behind victory. But on this night, it wasn't meant to be.

Instead, it was Penn State securing a 69-64 win over Iowa, mainly as a result of these four components. The loss drops the Hawkeyes to 13-13 overall and back into a four-way tie for seventh place in the Big Ten with a 5-8 conference mark.

Iowa entered this contest without the services of senior guard Bryce Cartwright, who suffered a high ankle sprain during a Feb. 11 practice back in Iowa City while chasing for a loose ball. With Cartwright out, sophomore guard Devyn Marble moved back to the point while freshman guard Josh Oglesby made his first career start. Marble wound up playing all 40 minutes and finishing with 13 points, eight rebounds and six assists. Oglesby had a poor shooting night, going just 1-of-7 from the floor and tallying three points.

The game was tied 10-10. Marble and freshman forward Aaron White each had five points for the Hawkeyes (White recorded his second straight double-double with 16 points and 10 rebounds). Penn State then proceeded to go a 15-2 run to build its lead up to 25-12, forcing head coach Fran McCaffery to burn a timeout.

Iowa would trim the deficit down to six points at 27-21, only for the Nittany Lions to finish the half on an 11-3 run and take a 38-24 lead with them into their locker room at halftime.

"It was unpleasant," Marble said about the message delivered by McCaffery at halftime. "But it got us going."

Senior guard Matt Gatens, who had two points and shot 0-of-5 from the floor in the first half, developed the hot hand and was the focal point of Iowa's second half surge. The Iowa City native knocked down five straight 3-point attempts and finished with a game-high 21 points for the Hawkeyes.

"I was just getting better looks, moving without the ball," Gatens said. "My teammates did a better job screening. A couple of them were on called sets. A couple of them were just getting open on my own and the guys finding me."

"It just wasn't enough."

With 2:40 remaining and the Nittany Lions ahead 61-58, Oglesby went to the foul line and had a chance to make it a one-point game. He missed the first attempt, but knocked down the second, cutting the deficit to two. After Penn State delivered a 3-point dagger that moved its lead back up to 66-61, Gatens would score, then sophomore forward Melsahn Basabe had a chance with 49 seconds remaining to bring it back to a one-point contest. Basabe missed both free throw attempts.

After Penn State called timeout with 10 seconds on the shot clock and 25 seconds on the game clock, Iowa fouled Cammeron Woodyard, who shot 35 percent from the charity stripe entering Thursday's game. He sank both free throws to put the Nittany Lions up five and then made another attempt in the game's final moments to preserve the win.

"To his credit, we fouled him on purpose," McCaffery said. "He stepped up there and drilled them."

Iowa returns home for a pair of games at Carver-Hawkeye Arena next week, starting with No. 18 Indiana paying a visit on Feb. 19. The Hoosiers won the first meeting between the two teams in Bloomington 103-89 back on Jan. 29. Tip-off is set for 5 p.m. Central and the game will air nationally on the Big Ten Network.

Addressing Cartwright's status, McCaffery said he'd be doubtful. Cartwright was in uniform Thursday despite not playing Thursday night and said his goal was to be back in time for Sunday's contest with Indiana. McCaffery also said he hasn't determined whether Oglesby would start again or if he'd consider putting Basabe back in the starting lineup for the first time since Iowa's 79-73 loss to Nebraska back on Jan. 26.

"I'll probably stick with what we had, but that would be the logical alternative, especially because they're so big," McCaffery said.