

Hawkeyes hammered by Spartans in quarterfinals

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – After winning its first Big Ten Tournament game in six years, the Iowa Hawkeyes found themselves eliminated by Michigan State for the second straight season on Friday, as the top-seeded Spartans defeated the eighth-seeded Hawkeyes, 92-75. The loss puts Iowa's record at 17-16 overall.

In the early going, it was a battle. Iowa jumped out to an early 7-2 lead before Michigan State came back to go ahead. Taking advantage early on was sophomore forward Zach McCabe, who scored nine of his 13 points during this stretch.

"You just knew that Matt [Gatens] was going to be closely guarded," McCabe said. "I had a lot of open opportunities and I just made baskets."

The two teams would be tied at 22-22 apiece with 10:45 left in the first half before everything began to unravel for the Hawkeyes.

It started with the Spartans going on a 9-0 run to move ahead 31-22 when head coach Fran McCaffery called timeout. But instead of Iowa being able to clot the bleeding, it became more profuse. The frustration would reach a boiling point when McCaffery was given a technical foul by official Ted Valentine in the final minute of the half.

Michigan State went into halftime holding a 55-39 lead and shooting 70 percent from the floor (21-of-30).

"I think they ultimately ended up shooting the ball better as

a result of putbacks and that's what we were trying to avoid," McCaffery said.

The 16-point deficit would continue to snowball on the Hawkeyes, as the Spartans led by as many as 28 points. Leading the charge for Michigan State was Big Ten Player of the Year Draymond Green, who posted a double-double of 21 points and 10 rebounds. It also received a 16-point effort from Adreian Payne, who shot 7-of-8 from the floor.

One of the few bright spots to emerge was freshman guard Josh Oglesby, who scored 15 of his team-high 20 points in the second half and finished shooting 7-of-9 from the floor and 5-of-7 from behind the arc.

"I get down on myself when I miss a couple of shots, but my confidence was good," Oglesby said. "I was making shots and once I got 2-3 shots going in, I just looked for my shot and I need to start doing that more."

Oglesby's hot shooting allowed Iowa to get within 15 points in the final minutes, but the Hawkeyes' deficit proved impossible to overcome.

With 1:48 left, senior guard Matt Gatens was taken out of the game and hugged everyone sitting along the Iowa bench as he exited for what may have been the final time.

"It was mixed because you don't know if it's the last one or not. You know it's the last time you're going to play in the Big Ten and in this arena and this environment," Gatens said. "It's tough."

NIT or bust

Following Friday's game, Iowa athletics director Gary Barta said whether or not the Hawkeyes' season continues squarely hinges on whether an NIT invite comes Sunday. If that invite doesn't come, the CBI has virtually been ruled out of the

equation, meaning the Hawkeyes' 2011-12 season would end after 33 games.

"On Sunday, they'll name the top 100 teams between the NCAA and NIT and that has been our focus," Barta said. "We want to be one of the top 100 teams. Players never want to stop playing and coaches never want to stop coaching, but at some point, you have to draw a line.

"I'm confident we'll get a chance to go to the NIT. If not, you turn the page."