

Hawkeyes reach NIT, will host Dayton

By Brendan Stiles

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The Iowa Hawkeyes will participate in postseason play for the first time since 2006.

Iowa will host Dayton in the first round of the NIT on Tuesday, with tip-off scheduled from Carver-Hawkeye Arena at 6:30 p.m. Central and the game airing nationally on ESPN. The Hawkeyes are playing host despite being the No. 7 because Dayton's arena is being used for the NCAA Tournament this week.

For senior guard Matt Gatens, the opportunity to play at least one more game in front of the home crowd is special.

"It means a lot to have another chance to play in Carver," Gatens said. "It would be great to go off with a win and play in front of the fans again and the family on that court. It's a really special opportunity."

Head coach Fran McCaffery said the team found out about its NIT bid as it was announced during the NIT Selection Show that aired on ESPNU earlier Sunday evening. However, he also said he felt optimistic about receiving an invite after returning from Indianapolis, where the Hawkeyes played this past weekend in the Big Ten Tournament.

"I thought we had a really good chance," McCaffery said. "I have great respect for this tournament. I've been fortunate enough to have teams in it before, and just very thankful for the opportunity."

As far as the actual match-up is concerned, Dayton possesses a

20-12 overall record and finished 9-7 in the Atlantic 10, losing in the quarterfinals of the A-10 Tournament to Xavier on March 9. The Flyers' résumé includes victories over Temple, Xavier, Saint Louis and Alabama – all of whom qualified for the NCAA tournament – as well as an 86-70 win over Minnesota that McCaffery was quick to point out came prior to the Golden Gophers losing forward Trevor Mbakwe to a season-ending knee injury.

"This is a very good team off the dribble," McCaffery said. "They've got tremendous guard play. They've got a number of different shooters. They've got solid post play. They run a lot of ball screens and they're going to attack our defense in every way."

Dayton guard Kevin Dillard, who leads the Flyers in scoring with an average of 13 points per game – is a player Gatens said he is familiar with from playing against him during his final summer on the AAU circuit.

"I remember we played them over in Fort Wayne and then maybe a couple of other times," Gatens said. "They had a good team and he's a good point guard."

Should Iowa win its first round game against the Flyers, it would face either No. 3 Oregon or No. 6 LSU in the next round at a date and time to be determined. The other portion of Iowa's NIT region includes No. 1 Washington, No. 8 Texas-Arlington, No. 4 Northwestern and No. 5 Akron. The semifinals and championship will be held later this month at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

Tickets for Tuesday's game between Iowa and Dayton are already on sale for Iowa season-ticket holders. The general public will be able to purchase tickets Monday at 1 p.m. Central. Admission is \$15 for adults and \$5 for any UI students and minors.

[2012 NIT Bracket](#)