

# 2012-13 Big Ten men's basketball previews: Iowa

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

The Big Ten kicks off its 2012-13 men's college basketball season next week, so this week, *HawkeyeDrive.com* will give you rundowns on all 12 conference teams. The series concludes with a look at the Iowa Hawkeyes, who are coming off an 18-17 season last year that concluded with a loss to Oregon in the second round of the NIT.

Speaking at Big Ten Basketball Media Day last week, third-year Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery used the phrase "cautiously optimistic" in describing his 2012-13 squad. It's an accurate phrase because while the Hawkeyes have to navigate through what will be a difficult Big Ten again this season, there's valid reason for optimism around Iowa City.

On one hand, Iowa is a team that returns quite a bit. Only four players from last season's team are gone, two of whom were starters. However, one of those two starters the Hawkeyes was Matt Gatens, who was the best and most important player Iowa had. There were games late last season where Gatens willed the Hawkeyes to victories and while replacing him isn't easy, Iowa is going to need someone to have similar attributes and step up in clutch situations.

Right now, the Hawkeyes have two guys who are more than capable of filling that void. One is junior guard Devyn Marble, who showed glimpses of being able to take over games while also playing out of position at the point. Now that Iowa can use him almost exclusively as a wing, Marble's numbers should go up this season. The other player capable of taking over a game at any given moment is sophomore forward Aaron

White. By the time conference play began, White began showing more stamina, became consistent with his production, eventually found himself in the starting lineup and ended up leading the Hawkeyes in rebounding as a freshman. These two players are locks to be starters.

Iowa has five other players who return this season and will be part of McCaffery's rotation, which is going to start out at least 10-deep. Senior forward Eric May was named a team captain and could be a starter when the season begins. If he's not, then the one spot that appears up for grabs would be between junior forwards Melsahn Basabe and Zach McCabe. Basabe began last season as a starter, only to find himself being benched and used as a reserve from January on. McCabe entered the starting lineup in late November and never looked back.

In addition to those three players, there's sophomore guard Josh Oglesby and center Gabe Olaseni. Oglesby will have a similar role this season as far as being someone who can provide a spark off the bench with his 3-point shooting. Olaseni didn't play much as a freshman, but has shown enough strides in the offseason that his number of minutes on the court should increase significantly.

Iowa also brought in five true freshmen this season that give the Hawkeyes depth they haven't experienced until now under McCaffery. The two freshmen expected to be in the starting lineup from the get-go are guard Mike Gesell and center Adam Woodbury. Gesell would be starting at the point, allowing Marble to make that move out to the wing. At 7-1, Woodbury gives Iowa a post presence it hasn't had since probably Erek Hansen back in 2005-06. Olaseni's improvement is of benefit here in the sense that if Woodbury struggles or has early foul trouble in any games, he could be taken out without the Hawkeyes having a huge drop-off inside.

Another one of the freshmen that will likely be included in the rotation along with Gesell and Woodbury is guard Anthony

Clemmons. Like Gesell, Clemmons can be used at the point and the times where he'll be on the court playing minutes will be when Iowa finds itself needing to clamp down defensively. There were times where the Hawkeyes' play at the defensive end of the court was horrendous. Bringing in a player like Clemmons gives them options when they need a defensive boost.

As far as the schedule is concerned, Iowa has a pretty weak non-conference slate. In November, the Hawkeyes will be playing two games in Cancun – one for sure against Western Kentucky and the other against either Wichita State or DePaul. Both Western Kentucky and Wichita State were NCAA Tournament teams last season. Iowa also has a pretty winnable game at Virginia Tech that's part of the Big Ten/ACC Challenge. December features a pair of in-state games against Iowa State at home and Northern Iowa in Des Moines as part of the newly-implemented Big Four Classic.

Looking at the Hawkeyes' Big Ten schedule, how they fare early on will be telling. Iowa's first seven Big Ten games are against the seven teams that finished ahead of it in the conference last season. If there's good news for the Hawkeyes, it's that the January match-ups at home against No. 14 Michigan State and on the road against No. 5 Michigan and No. 4 Ohio State are all single-plays. If Iowa can get through January with at least a couple marquee wins like it had at that time last season, the stage will be set in February and March for this team.

Ultimately, the key for Iowa is winning the games it's supposed to win. Losing a game like the one it lost to Campbell last season isn't going to fly this season if the Hawkeyes want to reach the Field of 68. This is a team that barring significant injury will play in some sort of postseason. There's reason to be optimistic about Iowa making the NCAA Tournament, but in order to get there, the Hawkeyes have to consistently show they can handle their business. That's the next step for this program.

Click on the links below to read our season previews of the other Big Ten teams (please note you must have either a paid monthly or yearly subscription, or a three-day free trial, to *HawkeyeDrive.com* to access all of these):

[Illinois](#) – March 5 (H)

[Indiana](#) – Dec. 31 (H), March 2 (A)

[Michigan](#) – Jan. 6 (A)

[Michigan State](#) – Jan. 10 (H)

[Minnesota](#) – Feb. 3 (A), Feb. 17 (H)

[Nebraska](#) – Feb. 21 (A), March 9 (H)

[Northwestern](#) – Jan. 13 (A), Feb. 9 (H)

[Ohio State](#) – Jan. 22 (A)

[Penn State](#) – Jan. 31 (H), Feb. 14 (A)

[Purdue](#) – Jan. 27 (A), Feb. 27 (H)

[Wisconsin](#) – Jan. 19 (H), Feb. 6 (A)

*(H) – Home game for Iowa; (A) – Away game for Iowa*