

COMMENTARY: An ugly blowout (premium)

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – If there's good news for the Iowa Hawkeyes three games into the 2012-13 season, they're 3-0 with three wins that, at least on paper, would look like woodshed beatings.

But what those on hand at Carver-Hawkeye Arena saw Thursday night as Iowa defeated Howard 66-36 was an ugly shooting display against a bad opponent.

There's no reason to sugarcoat this. Yes, Iowa won. It beat a team it's supposed to beat and probably beat soundly more often than not. Just looking at Thursday's final score alone, it would appear that's what the Hawkeyes did.

But while Iowa won, it shot the ball poorly the entire night and it was a collective effort in terms of poor shooting. Howard came into this game wanting to play zone, so naturally, any time Iowa got what it thought was a good look from 3-point range, it was taking them.

Yet all night long, these shots just weren't falling for the Hawkeyes. They finished 4-of-21 shooting from the perimeter. Let me repeat that: 4-of-21. One of those four made 3s, which came courtesy of junior guard Devyn Marble, hit the top of the backboard only to bounce in.

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said after the game he wasn't concerned, mainly because he didn't think any of the outside shots his team took were poor shots. He felt the looks were good, even though the end result was a brick.

Even if the shot selection wasn't poor, this end result is a bit concerning for the Hawkeyes going forward. The fact of the matter is their schedule will only get more difficult as they progress through the season.

Had Iowa been playing anyone in the Big Ten tonight as opposed to a Howard squad coming off a loss to a Division-II opponent, the Hawkeyes would've been run out of the gym. It felt like this team kept its composure mainly because the Bison weren't playing any better.

If 4-of-21 from 3-point range happens again come January or February, not only would it be a game lost, but probably a game lost because Iowa starts to unravel against a much better opponent as opposed to keeping composed against inferior competition.

The Hawkeyes have a plethora of talented outside shooters, but they can't all be having off nights on the same night like this again. Heck, if Iowa is ice-cold shooting again Saturday when it plays Gardner-Webb, a loss wouldn't be completely out of the realm of possibility.

Sure, the Hawkeyes will be and should be favored. But Gardner-Webb is coming to Carver-Hawkeye Arena off a win Thursday night at DePaul, one of the teams Iowa could potentially face in Cancun next week. It's also worth noting that Gardner-Webb hails from the same conference as Campbell, who gave the Hawkeyes their most humiliating defeat around this time last season.

Not every team is going to shoot 14-of-52 and commit 13 turnovers like Howard did Thursday night. In fact, the Bison might wind up being one of the worst teams (if not the worst team) Iowa plays all season.

Whether it's confidence, shooting off-balance, shots just not going in, whatever, something has to change. Now is the time for Iowa to figure it out, or what was a 30-point win on

Thursday might be a 30-point loss down the line.