

Shockers hand Hawkeyes first loss in Cancun

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HawkeyeDrive.com

The Iowa Hawkeyes were handed their first loss of the 2012-13 season Wednesday night in the championship game of the Cancun Challenge, falling 75-63 to Wichita State at the Moon Palace Resort in Cancun, Mexico. Iowa now sits at 5-1 nearing the halfway point of its non-conference slate.

Early on, it looked like it'd be a defensive struggle between the Hawkeyes and Shockers as neither team could buy a bucket. Add in Iowa having three of its key players in foul trouble – freshmen Mike Gesell and Adam Woodbury and junior Melsahn Basabe – early on and it never got in position to separate itself from Wichita State when ahead.

With Gesell riding the bench for most of the first half – a move head coach Fran McCaffery acknowledged in a postgame interview with the Hawkeye Radio Network was a mistake on his part – Iowa found itself relying heavily on the other guys in its backcourt, including freshman guard Patrick Ingram. Even though Ingram has been used sparingly this season, he played the final seven-plus minutes of the first half.

“I wanted to make sure he could play in the second half without thinking about it,” McCaffery said about benching Gesell. “But sometimes when you sit a freshman out that long, he never gets in sync and Mike was never in sync.”

Following a trio of 3-pointers late in the first half by sophomore guard Josh Oglesby, the Hawkeyes looked to be in control going into halftime, but gave up a 3-pointer in the final seconds that cut their lead down to 35-33. The second

half then completely belonged to the Shockers, who used a 13-2 run to go ahead 46-37 and not look back from that point forward.

Meanwhile, Iowa couldn't get anything going in the second half aside from making free throws. The Hawkeyes shot 4-of-24 from the floor in the game's final 20 minutes and wound up shooting 12-of-45 total. Of Iowa's 63 points on the evening, 31 of them came from the foul line. As for the Shockers, they managed to out-rebound the Hawkeyes 38-30, with 14 of their 38 boards coming at the offensive end. Wichita State also had 40 points contributed from its bench and held a 28-6 scoring edge in the paint.

"It was tough for anybody to get in a flow," senior Eric May said to the Hawkeye Radio Network following a 13-point, 6-rebound showing on Wednesday. "The game was kind of stop-and-go.

"We were all out there together. We win together and lose together. We learned from it and we're going to keep moving forward."

When the Hawkeyes do return back to the United States, they'll head back on the road next week to play at Virginia Tech in the Big Ten/ACC Challenge. Their game against the Hokies is set for 6:15 p.m. Central on Nov. 27 from Cassell Coliseum in Blacksburg, Va. It will be nationally televised by ESPNU.