

# COMMENTARY: Frontcourt production proves key (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – When the Iowa Hawkeyes looked their best Saturday afternoon, it was when their bigs were on the floor providing the boost.

As Iowa found itself cruising to an 88-59 victory over Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, it did so by dominating from the get-go. One of the keys to the Hawkeyes' early success was the start that came from freshman center Adam Woodbury.

The 7-1 Sioux City native had a reputation when he was younger of getting into early foul trouble that had carried over to the start of his Hawkeye career. But he managed to keep his aggressiveness in check and managed to reach halftime with only one foul.

As it turned out, Woodbury found himself playing 20 minutes Saturday, which is probably the amount of playing time he'll be getting this season when he's playing at his best. In those 20 minutes, he posted 13 points (for now, a career-high) and five rebounds.

There's no coincidence here. The more minutes Iowa can get out of Woodbury, the better he's going to play and the better off the Hawkeyes will be during a given game.

But it's not only in the starting lineup where frontcourt production was prevalent Saturday. Junior forward Melsahn Basabe has found a knack in his current role this season of someone who can come off the bench and provide a spark.

He did that, and more against the Islanders. Basabe finished with a team-high 17 points and five rebounds playing 13 minutes. When Iowa went on its 20-0 run in the first half, there was a stretch where Basabe scored 13 unanswered points and was playing quite arguably his best basketball since his freshman year.

While Saturday looked like Basabe's best to this point, the vital point to make here is it was consistent with the work ethic he has demonstrated all season. He recognizes the importance his presence has being an upperclassman and is making the most of it.

Looking at the performances of both Woodbury and Basabe, the best thing about them from Iowa's perspective is that they came on a day where sophomore Aaron White was off and junior Zach McCabe had been taken out of the starting lineup for the first time in over a calendar year. Now imagine if there's ever a game where all four players find themselves collectively clicking.

This is all simply another aspect of the depth Iowa has this season as opposed to years past under head coach Fran McCaffery. But it's a key piece. It proved to be a key piece Saturday against the Islanders. It'll continue to be a key piece for the Hawkeyes as they continue to navigate through their 2012-13 schedule, which will only get more and more challenging.