

Hawkeyes drain UNI in Big Four Classic

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

DES MOINES, Iowa – Eight days removed from an enormous nine-point victory over Iowa State, the Iowa Hawkeyes had to take that next step of their ongoing maturation process.

They entered their Big Four Classic bout against a Northern Iowa squad that embarrassed them last year and do so inside Wells Fargo Arena, where the Hawkeyes had one of their worst showings in 2011-12 against Creighton.

Iowa found itself in a tussle Saturday afternoon, but took that necessary next step, defeating UNI 80-73 to improve to 9-2 overall. It marks the first time in four seasons the Hawkeyes have managed to win games against both Iowa State and UNI in the same year.

“To go out like that with the in-state games, it’s exciting,” said Iowa’s lone senior Eric May, who had a team-high seven assists. “It’s a part of basketball, winning those rivalry games that are in-state. With a good crowd and a good team like that, it’s just really exciting.”

Early on, the Hawkeyes pulled out to an 8-2 lead, but allowed the Panthers to get back in the game thanks in part to a bundle of turnovers (13 of them in the first half alone to be precise). But Iowa’s positives not just at the start, but throughout the 40 minutes played Saturday, were propelled by shooting 12-of-25 from behind the 3-point line.

Junior guard Devyn Marble and freshman guard Mike Gesell were the two players who continuously torched the nets, going a

combined 8-of-15 from beyond the arc. Marble finished with a game-high 30 points, while Gesell ended up posting a career-high of 23 points.

What made Marble's performance all the more amazing for those who watched was that he got to the free-throw line by himself more times (19) than the Panthers did as a team (17).

"I got into a rhythm," Marble said. "I wanted to come out and be aggressive. Coach Andrew [Francis] just told me to come out and be smart and aggressive at the same time and I felt like I did a really good job of that today."

Outside of the first few minutes of the game, Iowa didn't trail. UNI would continue putting the pressure on the Hawkeyes thanks in large part to scoring 48 points in the paint. Iowa's lead in the second half was at 59-55 when the Hawkeyes made what head coach Fran McCaffery called the two biggest buckets of the entire game.

First came a basket from junior forward Melsahn Basabe that pushed the lead to 61-55. Then with 5:35 remaining, sophomore forward Aaron White nailed a 3-pointer – his only made field-goal attempt the entire day – to push the lead back up to nine points. From there on, the outcome was never really in doubt for the Hawkeyes.

"He missed one early and hasn't been shooting well and he just stepped up," McCaffery said. "You know, when they threw it to him, he was right in front of me and he didn't hesitate. He drilled it."

Iowa now returns home to start another three-game home stand to close out the 2012 portion of its season. The Hawkeyes' next game will be Dec. 19 against South Carolina State and is scheduled to tip-off at 8 p.m. Central from Carver-Hawkeye Arena. The game will be televised nationally on the Big Ten Network.