

Hawkeyes suffer heartbreaker to Spartans

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – The magnifying glass was placed upon the Iowa Hawkeyes Thursday evening at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. For 38 minutes, Iowa looked like a team that would come away with its first Big Ten win of the season and do so against a ranked opponent.

But in those final two minutes, the game slipped from the Hawkeyes' fingertips. Instead of notching that victory, they witnessed No. 22 Michigan State rip their hearts out with a 62-59 squeaker. Now Iowa finds itself at 0-3 in Big Ten play and sitting at 11-5 overall.

"I thought we were playing so well," junior forward Zach McCabe said. "For that to happen, it just sucks."

The first half was one that was mostly dominated by the Hawkeyes. For the second straight game, Iowa jumped out to an early 7-0 lead. After Michigan State came back to tie it, the Hawkeyes then proceeded to go on a 17-5 run and hold a 26-14 on the Spartans.

With its leading scorer Devyn Marble missing the first game of his career due to an ankle injury, Iowa's offense was sparked during this stretch by its two other juniors – McCabe and fellow forward Melsahn Basabe. The duo came off the bench and accounted for nearly half of the Hawkeyes' points Thursday. McCabe finished with team-highs of 15 points and seven rebounds while Basabe collected 14 points of his own.

"They were fabulous," McCaffery said. "They did exactly what

we needed them to do. They're juniors coming off the bench. They've been through it."

But then Iowa went scoreless for 6:43 and Michigan State got within two points. Sophomore forward Aaron White ended the drought to push Iowa to a 28-24 halftime lead.

The second half started with much of the same, as the Hawkeyes extended their lead. However, Michigan State not only went on another run, but eventually took its first lead of the night at 43-42. Iowa would regain the lead with a 3-pointer from McCabe to make it 51-49. After the Spartans tied it, Basabe scored four unanswered points to give the Hawkeyes a 55-51 edge with just over two minutes remaining.

A Michigan State free throw would make it a one-possession game when White fouled Michigan State's Gary Harris in the act of shooting a 3-pointer. Harris would sink all three of his free-throw attempts to tie the game at 56-56.

"I tried to contest him and I thought I got the ball," White said. "They called it. Obviously, I would've preferred them not to call it. But it is what it is. I didn't think I got him."

Moments later, the Spartans would go ahead when Branden Dawson forced one of 18 Hawkeye turnovers on the night and finished the fast break with a dunk. Michigan State's lead would get to 60-57 when Iowa freshman guard Anthony Clemmons was fouled and went to the line for a pair of free throws.

After making the first, Clemmons missed the second. However, Iowa came away with the loose ball and Clemmons wound up going back to the charity stripe with a chance to tie it. The Lansing native made the first, but missed the second and when there was a scramble for a loose ball, it was the Spartans who recovered it the second time around.

"I felt it come short the first time I missed and the second

time," Clemmons said. "I just knew it was coming off. I was hoping we'd get the rebound again. Unfortunately, we didn't."

Following a pair of Keith Appling free throws, Iowa had one last chance to send the game to overtime. Clemmons shot a contested 3-pointer that came up short. With the magnifying glass shining brightly on the Hawkeyes, they were unable to deliver.

"We had a couple of costly turnovers and that's just part of execution as a team," Basabe said. "Our whole team execution wasn't good enough. We had a four-point lead.

"It's not about the coaches. It's about, 'Do we want it? Are we going to do what it takes to hold onto a lead like that?' They pushed and they wanted the game. Unfortunately, we were on the losing side."

Iowa's next game is Jan. 13 at Northwestern. The Wildcats enter with a 1-2 Big Ten mark after defeating Penn State on Thursday in State College, Pa. Tip-off from Evanston's Welsh-Ryan Arena is set for 4:30 p.m. Central and the game will be televised nationally on ESPNU.