

1/16/2013: Iowa men's basketball notebook

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – What was already anticipated to be an emotionally-revved Saturday evening inside Carver-Hawkeye Arena with Chris Street being honored had an additional storyline added late Tuesday night.

When Iowa plays Wisconsin, it will be facing a Badger team sitting atop the Big Ten standings at 4-0 in league play. The conference's only remaining unbeaten is coming off a stunning 64-59 upset of No. 2 Indiana. Stunning, not because Wisconsin won, but because it did so at Assembly Hall and with a team that as recently as two weeks ago didn't look tournament-worthy.

The Badgers enter this game looking to exact revenge on the Hawkeyes, who took both meetings between the two teams last season. The more recent Iowa win came by one point at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in a game where guard Matt Gatens scored 33 points to lead the way.

Although a 4-0 start for the Wisconsin looked very unlikely when Big Ten play started, Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery isn't surprised to see the Badgers find early success once again and pointed to them having a starting lineup that features four upperclassmen, including three seniors.

"That's an experienced team and very few teams are that experienced," McCaffery said.

One key reason for Wisconsin's success during Big Ten play has been avoiding turnovers. In four Big Ten games thus far, the

Badgers have only committed a total of 31 turnovers, or nearly eight turnovers per game. As for the Hawkeyes, they're currently in the middle of a week-long stretch between games after defeating Northwestern 70-50 on Sunday to snap a three-game losing streak.

Iowa's play at the defensive end of the floor proved key in that victory over the Wildcats and a similar effort will be needed if the Hawkeyes are going to continue their winning ways.

"One is to keep heat on them, put pressure on their point guard, try to force them into as many turnovers as possible and then no second shots," sophomore forward Aaron White said. "You want to get the rebound and push it, run the ball up their backs."

"They don't always get back well defensively and we've exploited that in the past. If they take care of the ball, we're going to have to take good shots."

One player who seems to be O.K. with the lengthy period of time between games is junior guard Devyn Marble, who returned to the floor Sunday after a sprained ankle prevented him from playing against Michigan State on Jan. 10.

"I really don't like weeks off, but for the situation and circumstances right now, it is [helpful] for me," Marble said. "So I'm definitely going to use it to my advantage."

Players learn about Street

On Tuesday, McCaffery pulled his team aside and showed it a documentary about Chris Street that told his life story – from how he grew up wanting to be a Hawkeye, to his tragic death in 1993. Knowing that Street was being honored during Iowa's game on Saturday, he wanted his to be aware of not just what transpired 20 years ago, but why Street remains held in such high regard now.

"We go to pregame meals all the time together and we leave together, or we leave separately," McCaffery said. "The whole idea that you would get a phone call or you'd be called into a meeting and one of us is gone, I just can't imagine.

"I think there will be so many people in that building with so many different emotions."

With the majority of the team either not having been born yet or still wearing diapers when Street's death occurred, the film opened plenty of eyeballs.

Eric May, Iowa's lone scholarship senior, was two years old when Street died. Unlike many of his teammates, May knew plenty about Street given both his time in the program and the fact he's a native of Dubuque, Iowa. But even he managed to take away more about Street after watching the documentary than he had known before.

"It was his dream, just like mine, to play at Iowa," May said. "It was his dream come true and I think a lot of players here that are Iowa guys can relate to that and how important he was and how important he is to this program."

Then are those like junior forward Melsahn Basabe. Growing up in Glen Cove, N.Y., Basabe didn't know about Street until he arrived at Iowa in 2010. Like the rest of his teammates, the documentary provided him with a deeper appreciation for what Street meant to those who knew him.

"He was kind of an underdog," Basabe said. "Nobody expected him to do a lot and I liked that about him. He wasn't expected to do a lot and he was a small-town kid, but he worked and he was going against the best teams in the country."

Davis visits Carver

Former Iowa head coach Tom Davis was spotted leaving Carver-Hawkeye Arena Wednesday afternoon and took time to speak with

reporters about Street.

When asked about attending Saturday's game, Davis said he was "still undecided." In a Jan. 2 phone interview with *HawkeyeDrive.com*, Davis had mentioned it would be unlikely for him to attend, but that he'd "be there in spirit."

During Saturday's game, there will be a halftime ceremony that includes a video tribute to Street and recognition of Chris Street Award winners. Between 60-80 members of Street's immediate and extended families are expected to be at Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Saturday.

Iowa also announced Wednesday that the game is a sellout, the fourth sellout the Hawkeyes have had during the 2012-13 season.