

Hawkeyes hold off Nittany Lions for needed win

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – The Iowa Hawkeyes faced a desperate opponent in Penn State on Thursday and found themselves needing to play as desperately in order to snap a two-game losing streak.

A 14-0 run in the first half jump-started Iowa and the Hawkeyes would remain aggressive the rest of the evening en route to a 76-67 win over the Nittany Lions at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. The victory now has Iowa sitting at 3-5 in Big Ten play and 14-7 overall, while Penn State still find itself in search of its first conference win sitting at 0-9.

Offensively, the Hawkeyes started in a funk similar to the one they played with last weekend in an overtime loss to Purdue. Iowa fell behind 10-3, shot just 1-of-4 from the floor and had already committed four turnovers.

Then came that 14-0 run, which was sparked by sophomore forward Aaron White. The Strongsville, Ohio native scored seven unanswered points to tie the game at 10-10 and would go on to finish with a career-high 27 points on the evening. White shot 8-of-15 from the floor and was 10-of-11 from the foul line after missing two crucial free throws in last weekend's loss to the Boilermakers.

"I don't think we came out with the mentality to put them away early, but we went on a 16-2 run, which is a good answer by us," White said. "The transition really got going."

Once the Hawkeyes built their lead, they wouldn't look back the rest of the night. In addition to White's outing, Iowa

received another solid performance from junior forward Melsahn Basabe, who made his first start of the season Thursday in place of freshman guard Anthony Clemmons.

McCaffery said afterwards the decision to start Basabe came as a result of how the 6-7 forward looked in practice the last two days and from having "earned" the right to start again after being benched around this time last season.

"He has been very efficient," McCaffery said. "He makes his free throws. He sticks his nose on the glass. He gives you a low-post presence and defensively, he's just so far ahead of where he used to be.

"He's seeing the game and he's affecting the game at both ends and what you're seeing is a guy, as a result of that, who is more confident in himself."

Basabe, who had played a total of 58 minutes off the bench in the Hawkeyes' previous two games last week, posted a double-double Thursday of 10 points and 10 rebounds. At one point in the second half, Basabe scored six straight Iowa points from the free-throw line. As a team, the Hawkeyes got to the line 39 times Thursday and converted on 31 of those free-throw attempts.

"Whatever's going down, I'm totally with," Basabe said. "I'm just trying to be Melsahn Basabe and just play as hard as I can and be a team player. That's it."

Iowa now heads back on the road for two straight games. Its next contest comes on the afternoon of Super Bowl Sunday (Feb. 3) as the Hawkeyes take on No. 23 Minnesota at Williams Arena in Minneapolis. Tip-off is slated for 12 p.m. Central with the Big Ten Network airing the game to a national audience.

The Golden Gophers snapped a four-game losing streak with an 84-65 win over Nebraska on Tuesday and will be seeking revenge for two losses at the hands of Iowa last season.