

COMMENTARY: Marble regains swagger (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – The recent struggles of Iowa junior guard Devyn Marble were well-documented. In the Hawkeyes' last two games, a player who for a majority of the season had been Iowa's leading scorer had a combined two points.

Against Minnesota, Marble took just two shots, not making either one. He also made a critical turnover late in the game. More recently against Wisconsin, Marble was more aggressive, but still shot just 1-of-10 from the floor.

On Saturday, head coach Fran McCaffery's decision to stick with his star guard paid dividends. Iowa snapped a two-game losing streak by beating Northwestern 71-57 Saturday afternoon at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, and the player who got it all started for the Hawkeyes was Marble.

Iowa's first points of the game came on a play where Marble attacked the hoop and finished with a dunk. Moments later, he would take his first 3-point attempt from the corner and drain it. Right away, Marble had five of the Hawkeyes' first seven points.

Marble ended up with a game-high 21 points and did it on 8-of-13 shooting. He also led Iowa in both rebounds with five and assists with five. He was that spark the Hawkeyes needed Saturday after having been a complete non-factor over the past few weeks.

To Marble's credit, he didn't act as though what he did against Northwestern was anything special. If anything, he

looked at his performance as one he feels he should have on a more consistent basis.

That's a good attitude to have because one game doesn't completely get a player out of a funk. One could make the case another Hawkeye player – sophomore guard Josh Oglesby – is out of his funk because he has shown consistency for Iowa over this past week. He came away with 10 points Saturday after games where he had eight points against Minnesota and seven against Wisconsin. Not only that, but McCaffery described him as being one of the best players on the floor for Iowa Saturday in terms of what he did defensively as well.

Going back to Marble, he isn't quite there yet. But with a couple more performances like the one he had Saturday in upcoming games against Penn State and Minnesota, he could be. If that happens, things could really bode well for the Hawkeyes down the stretch, much like they did at this time last year when Matt Gatens started to play to his maximum capabilities.

Marble is more than capable of having a 2013 run similar to what Gatens provided in 2012. Iowa's going to need it, too. It's clearly a better team, especially offensively, when Marble is playing at or near his absolute best.

With the Hawkeyes having a schedule many consider to be favorable to them between now and next month's Big Ten Tournament, this is a golden opportunity for Marble to regain his swagger and then some. If he's able to do that, Iowa could be a dangerous team for anyone to play by season's end.