

Hawkeye meltdown in Lincoln

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

LINCOLN, Neb. – Like the snow accumulated from Winter Storm Q earlier this week, the Iowa Hawkeyes saw a first-half flurry melt away Saturday in a 64-60 loss to Nebraska that could only be described as crushing.

This loss could wind up being fatal to any NCAA tournament hopes now as the Hawkeyes drop to 6-8 in the Big Ten and back into a tie for seventh place with Minnesota, while also possessing a 17-10 overall record that now includes a loss to a Nebraska squad that moved up to 10th in the league.

“I hope they all feel as badly as I feel right now,” Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said. “You know, we’re all in this together. I’m not finger-pointing at anybody, but you can go and say, ‘What about this? What about that?’”

For 20 minutes, Iowa looked exactly like Nebraska coach Tim Miles tweeted at halftime it looked – [“like they are playing for something.”](#) Despite some missed bunnies, the Hawkeyes made three consecutive 3-pointers late in the first half and held a 41-22 lead with 53 seconds left in the first half.

Then came the second half, one where Iowa scored 19 points and shot 28 percent (7-of-25) from the floor while the Cornhuskers fought their way back with 39 points on 63 percent (15-of-24) shooting.

“We took our foot off the gas a little bit and we just weren’t as aggressive as we were,” senior forward Eric May said. “On defense and offense, we got tentative. I, myself, was making poor decisions on both ends.

“It hurts because we did things that aren’t characteristic of

us."

For most of the second half though, it appeared as though Iowa eventually had a response. Possessing a 45-37 lead, the Hawkeyes got a couple of key buckets from junior guard Devyn Marble, who finished with a team-high 18 points on 7-of-14 shooting. Iowa even got a key putback in the second half from May, who played 24 minutes off the bench and recorded 10 points and three steals.

But the Cornhuskers continued to battle while the Hawkeyes continued to wilt.

Nebraska would cut Iowa's lead down to 57-56 when guard Shavon Shields hit a jumper to give the Cornhuskers their first lead since going up 2-0 at the game's start. Iowa's deficit would extend to 60-57 before sophomore forward Aaron White hit a game-tying 3-pointer with 1:29 remaining.

The Hawkeyes would get a chance to take the lead again, but Marble would be called for a charge as he attacked the hoop, giving Nebraska possession with 44.6 seconds left.

It would then be a contested 3-pointer haunting Iowa once again, as Nebraska guard Dylan Talley took a shot from the top of the key with freshman guard Mike Gesell on him that put the Cornhuskers back ahead 63-60.

"In that situation, I don't want a drive and foul, I don't want them to throw it inside. I mean, they were scoring every time they threw it inside it seemed like," McCaffery said. "We wanted them to shoot a contested jumper in that situation. That's what they shot and the kid made it. You got to give it to him."

Gesell would then get an opportunity to tie the game himself with a 3-pointer, but it wasn't able to fall.

"We needed a 3 and the kid hit a tough shot," Gesell said

after playing for the first time collegiately in his home state of Nebraska. "I had the confidence it was going in. It was just a little bit long."

As a result of this game being pushed back two days due to Winter Storm Q, Iowa now has two fewer days to rebound from this defeat. The Hawkeyes return to Carver-Hawkeye Arena to play Purdue on Feb. 27. Tip-off is slated for 7:30 p.m. Central and the game will be televised nationally on the Big Ten Network.

Iowa lost its prior meeting this season to the Boilermakers, 65-62, in overtime back on Jan. 27 in West Lafayette, Ind.

"Moping about it isn't going to get anything done," May said. "Feeling sorry for ourselves isn't going to do anything. We've got to take care of business and just keep moving forward."