

# Hawkeyes eliminate Wildcats at Big Ten tourney

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

CHICAGO, Ill. – Before embarking on the United Center for the 2013 Big Ten Tournament, Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery made mention of the sixth-seeded Hawkeyes' first-round match-up with No. 11 Northwestern as being "the next step" in Iowa's journey.

The Hawkeyes took that next step Thursday, defeating the Wildcats 73-59 to advance to the quarterfinals for a showdown with third-seeded Michigan State. By winning this game, Iowa moved to 21-11 overall and perhaps, one step closer to a possible NCAA tournament bid.

Iowa came in with a mindset of wanting to attack Northwestern inside from the start and started the game on an 11-0 run. In fact, the Wildcats went the first 7:28 before finally tallying points on the scoreboard.

"I thought our defensive intensity at the start of the game was absolutely critical," Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said. "I think it really got us going."

During this stretch, the Hawkeyes were getting inside and junior forward Melsahn Basabe was dominating the glass, hauling in seven rebounds in the game's first four minutes.

Basabe ended up with his second consecutive double-double as he posted 10 points and a game-high 12 rebounds.

"I was just grabbing every ball that I had seen," Basabe said. "I was rebounding throughout the game. They started making shots, so I wasn't able to get a lot of rebounds. But I just

stayed aggressive throughout the game.”

While Iowa was imposing its will, the Wildcats were trying to disrupt the flow. Northwestern head coach Bill Carmody used four of his team’s five timeouts in the first half and burned the final one 51 seconds into the second half.

As a result, the first 21 minutes of the game featured nine stoppages of play in addition to a 15-minute halftime session.

“That was the first time I had ever seen a coach go through his entire timeouts in the first half,” said junior guard Devyn Marble, who finished with a game-high 19 points. “I’m not judging what he does with his timeouts, but it was different.

“I think it could help in certain situations, but we were just so focused and so into the game that it didn’t take us out of our rhythm. But in a normal game or with a normal team, that really might have changed the momentum of the game being timeout after timeout like that.”

One of the timeouts came following a monster dunk by senior forward Eric May, who found a lane and slammed it down to put Iowa up 29-13. It was one of a few key plays that cemented the fact Iowa wasn’t going to lose on this night.

“My teammates, they couldn’t see my eyes, but they knew I was going up because I started moving a little fast. Had a little pep in my step,” May said. “But [Aaron White], he set a screen – basically, a screen – for me and he let me know right after the dunk, so I gave him some props for it.”

The other keys came in the second half from freshman guard Mike Gesell, who returned to the floor and started Thursday after missing the last four games due to a stress reaction in his foot. After Northwestern trimmed Iowa’s lead down to 47-39 in the second half, Gesell knocked down a 3-pointer to push the lead back to double digits.

Then later in the game, with the Hawkeyes ahead 64-56, Gesell executed an old-fashioned 3-point play that would seal the win for Iowa.

"I'm just looking to be confidence and make plays down the stretch for the team," Gesell said. "I saw a lane, so I just decided to take it to the hole."

Up next for the Hawkeyes is Michigan State, who enters ranked No. 8 nationally in this week's AP poll. The Spartans won the lone meeting this season between these two teams 62-59 on Jan. 10 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. However, Iowa was without Marble's services.

Combined that with Michigan State having eliminated the Hawkeyes from the Big Ten Tournament each of the previous two seasons, and the motivation is there for Iowa entering this quarterfinal contest.

"I'm getting sick of losing to them in this tournament, to be honest," Marble said. "I said that to myself today: 'Every year, it's the same team.' Hopefully, we can make a change of that tomorrow."

Tip-off from the United Center is scheduled approximately 8 p.m. Central (25 minutes following the conclusion of the quarterfinal between No. 10 Ohio State and Nebraska). The game between Iowa and Michigan State will be televised nationally on the Big Ten Network.