

# Hawkeyes unravel late, fall to Spartans

By Brendan Stiles

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CHICAGO, Ill. – For the first 30 minutes of Friday's Big Ten tourney quarterfinal, the Iowa Hawkeyes physically imposed their will on a Michigan State squad considered to be one of the most physical teams in the entire Big Ten. Except then there were those last 10 minutes.

Leading 47-35 midway through the second half, Iowa appeared on its way to acquiring that signature win its résumé for the NCAA Tournament was needing. But a combination of miscues, giving up second chance opportunities and perhaps some officiating issues that led to breakdowns mentally sent what looked to be a great night for the Hawkeyes into a downward spiral.

Instead of moving on to a semifinal match-up against No. 10 Ohio State, Iowa allowed No. 8 Michigan State to end Friday's quarterfinal on a 24-9 run and exit the United Center 59-56 victors over the Hawkeyes. Now Iowa sits at 21-12 overall and sweating the hours leading up to Selection Sunday.

"Until we get sick of this feeling, it's going to continue to happen," junior guard Devyn Marble said.

The evening began much like the last time these teams met in January. Iowa jumped out to an early 7-0 lead that night and on Friday was up 9-2 out of the gate. The first half showcased the Hawkeyes at their best in two regards – shooting 50 percent from the floor (10-of-20) and playing suffocating defense on Michigan State, who shot 8-of-30 during the first 20 minutes.

Iowa took a 30-20 lead with it into halftime. But the Spartans found themselves only trailing by 10 for two reasons. First, the Hawkeyes were turning the ball over and ended up with 19 for the entire game, and secondly, Michigan State hauled in 16 offensive rebounds, creating second chance opportunities.

These two components of the game played a key role in the Spartans mounting their comeback. Even while Iowa managed to shoot around 50 percent for most of the game, Michigan State began to re-establish its identity and scored 34 of its 59 points either off Hawkeye turnovers or from second chances.

"They have a tendency to turn it up a little bit, Michigan State does, and they have the players that can do that," May said. "I don't think it was just totally us."

The Spartans would take their first lead of the entire game with 4:09 left when Gary Harris hit a 3-pointer to put them ahead 50-49. The lead would extend to 55-49 before Iowa could get anything going again.

Trailing 57-51, sophomore forward Aaron White nailed a 3-pointer that hit the back of the rim, bounced up and swished through. After a Melsahn Basabe bucket cut Michigan State's lead down to one, a key controversial call was made as White was called for a shooting foul that appeared to be all-ball.

"I'd probably get in trouble if I answered that how I wanted to," White said after making a comment about how Friday's loss felt different from other games the Hawkeyes had lost this season.

Iowa would get one final opportunity with nine seconds left to tie the game with a 3-pointer. But Marble's attempt off an inbounds pass from sophomore guard Josh Oglesby would be contested and hauled in by Michigan State, who then proceeded to run out the rest of the clock.

"I was going to dribble hand-off to Josh after he inbounded,

but we were so close to the end line, I didn't want to put him in that position having to fade out of bounds," Marble said. "I knew I could get the shot off with Keith [Appling] on me. He's, like, 6-foot.

"It felt good and it looked good, but it just didn't go in."

The Hawkeyes now find themselves awaiting whether they'll make their return to the NCAA tournament for the first time in seven seasons or will make a second consecutive appearance in the NIT due to a combination of poor RPI and strength of schedule.

Marble said afterwards he doesn't care what the RPI says. His teammates were in unison with him, as was McCaffery, in sharing their belief for why they should hear their name called on Selection Sunday.

"Without question," McCaffery said. "You look at the numbers across the board, you look at how we have played in the best conference in the country. We're clearly one of the best teams, no question about it."