

Hawkeyes down Sycamores in NIT opener

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – For the second straight season, the Iowa Hawkeyes found themselves hosting an NIT first round contest. Just like last year when it managed to defeat Dayton in front of a frenzied Carver-Hawkeye Arena crowd, Iowa was able to dispose of Indiana State on Wednesday, downing the Sycamores 68-52.

But this wasn't a game where the Hawkeyes, who moved to 22-12 overall with the win, could simply show up. Right out of the gate, the Sycamores knocked down a pair of 3-pointers to go up 6-0 and at one point in the first half held an eight-point lead while shooting 50 percent from the floor.

Trailing 26-18, Iowa put together a 13-4 run to end the first half and take a 31-30 lead with it into the locker room at halftime. During this stretch, Iowa made seven of its last 10 shots, while Indiana State missed its final four shots of the half.

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said it was a matter of the Hawkeyes being able to get more pressure on the Sycamores defensively.

"You have to be up into them, or they are going to score," McCaffery said. "It was imperative that we continue to get up and pressure and essentially wear them down over the course of time."

Both teams struggled to get any offense going in the second half before a key turning point came with 14:20 remaining.

Indiana State was caught accidentally having six players on the floor and was called for a technical foul.

Junior forward Zach McCabe went to the free-throw line, sank both his attempts and then proceeded to hit a pair of 3-pointers to extend Iowa's lead to 47-34 before Indiana State called a timeout.

"I knew that I could knock those down and hopefully it got me in a groove," McCabe. "It did. It just helped me carry through the rest of the game and it just got us going as a team."

From there, Iowa was able to coast, mainly because of dominating performances from its key players. Coming off a 5-point, 0-rebound performance against Michigan State last week, sophomore forward Aaron White finished with a double-double of 11 points and 13 rebounds.

Then there was the play of junior guard Devyn Marble. Not only did Marble finish with a game-high 24 points, but he also compiled six assists, five rebounds and four steals. McCaffery said afterwards Marble "played with great confidence" and added he has played over recent weeks as well as anyone at the collegiate level.

"I think this is as complete as I think I've had," Marble said, adding that he felt he had other performances this season that were similar. "I filled the stat sheet up a little bit and I think that's what I have to do."

"I just have to make myself play with a little more energy and be more active defensively and cause more turnovers. When I do that, I think it makes it easier on myself and on the rest of the team."

Iowa's second round opponent will be Stony Brook, who upset Massachusetts 71-58 on Wednesday and will make the trek to Carver-Hawkeye Arena for a game March 22. Tip-off is slated for 8:30 p.m. Central and the game will be televised

nationally on ESPNU.

It will also be one more opportunity for senior forward Eric May to play in front of the home crowd.

“Getting to play here, it’s huge,” May said.