

Hawkeyes defeat Stony Brook, one win from MSG

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Guided by an electric atmosphere inside Carver-Hawkeye Arena Friday night, the Iowa Hawkeyes continued their march towards New York City by defeating Stony Brook 75-63 in the second round of the NIT and now find themselves 40 minutes away from playing inside Madison Square Garden.

Forty-eight hours had passed since Iowa defeated Indiana State and the momentum from that victory carried over into the start of Friday's match-up. The Hawkeyes quickly jumped out to a 17-11 lead, with junior guard Devyn Marble scoring 10 of those points.

Marble, who went on to record game-highs of 28 points and five assists, cited the enthusiasm from the Carver-Hawkeye Arena crowd from the get-go for energizing him and his teammates.

"Just wanted to get off to a good start against this team," Marble said. "They have really good guard play and when you have good guard play, you're always going to be within striking distance.

"We knew they weren't going to go away. We had to keep fighting and the crowd helps you to keep fighting. It fueled us tonight."

For most of the first half, the Hawkeyes and Seawolves exchanged scores and Stony Brook even held a lead late in the half. With the game tied 34-34, sophomore guard Josh Oglesby nailed a 3-pointer in the closing seconds to put Iowa up by three at halftime.

Then came the start of the second half when the Hawkeyes began to seize control of the game. It started with junior forward Melsahn Basabe's dunk to give Iowa a 41-39 lead. Playing against a school located close to his hometown of Glen Cove, N.Y., the 6-7 Basabe didn't want to disappoint.

"We needed something," Basabe said. "Stony Brook's really close to my house and I really couldn't fathom losing and having to go back home and hearing that."

After Stony Brook would tie the game at 41-41, the Hawkeyes retook the lead on a 3-pointer from freshman guard Mike Gesell, who played 19 minutes coming off the bench Friday. Gesell, who has been dealing with a stress reaction in his foot for the past month, said he wasn't able to practice Thursday between NIT games, but that he was determined not to let the ongoing injury force him out of action.

Following his 3-pointer, Gesell then fed Basabe for another dunk to make it 46-41 in Iowa's favor.

"I was just looking to stay aggressive and looking to play with confidence," Gesell said. "Part of that is our fan base to come out here. It was nice to have another home game and they really showed us a lot of support tonight. They were rowdy, they were loud and they were really behind us tonight."

The Hawkeyes would extend the lead to double digits and force a Seawolves timeout when junior forward Zach McCabe nailed a 3-pointer to make it 54-44.

"He gives you solid play at both ends and then he's a threat," McCaffery said. "We needed to be able to have some 3-point shooters in the game with the way they guard."

The final dagger came from senior forward Eric May, who got the start in place of Gesell. May's only field goal of the entire night came at a crucial point, as he nailed a 3-pointer to put Iowa ahead 67-56. In the final minute of play,

McCaffery was able to take May out of the game to give him perhaps one final curtain call in front of the Iowa faithful.

“It was really special,” May said. “To have the crowd all there standing there cheering for you and our team and what we’ve done, I wouldn’t trade it for anything. I’m just really happy I got to experience that.”

Now all that stands between the Hawkeyes and a trip to The Big Apple is an NIT quarterfinal contest on March 27. Iowa will play the winner of Sunday’s second round game between St. John’s and Virginia.

If St. John’s were to get the road win, the Red Storm would pay a visit to Carver-Hawkeye Arena and Iowa would be getting one last home game. Otherwise, the Hawkeyes will travel to Charlottesville, Va., should the Cavaliers win on their home floor.