

Hawkeyes advance to NIT title game

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

NEW YORK CITY, N.Y. – One more win.

Sure, it's the NIT. Sure, the Iowa Hawkeyes didn't envision their 2012-13 season culminating at Madison Square Garden playing in this tournament. But to this team's credit, Iowa has continued to play with purpose, which is a big reason why the Hawkeyes defeated Maryland 71-60 in the NIT Semifinals on Tuesday and now find themselves one win away from winning a championship.

Iowa looked like a team that wanted the Big Apple spotlight Tuesday night. Maryland had an early 4-0 lead, but the Hawkeyes then scored 11 unanswered points and never relinquished their lead from that point on. Once again sparking Iowa's play from the start was junior guard Devyn Marble, who finished with a game-high 21 points and also tallied nine rebounds to lead the Hawkeyes.

"It was a big key to the game, getting out early and sending the first punch," Marble said. "Coach [Sherman] Dillard said in the pregame speech it might take more than one and we were going to have to keep doing it again and again."

Marble scored 10 of Iowa's first 18 points and the Hawkeyes led by as many as 14 points in the first half, thanks in part to not only forcing 17 Terrapin turnovers, but scoring 27 points off those takeaways.

"They look great in transition sometimes and other times they try to make too many passes and they turn the ball over,"

sophomore forward Aaron White said about tendencies he noticed watching film beforehand. "A strength is their rebounding and they're going to be physical with you down low and that's what they were.

"But we took advantage of their turnovers and turned them into points and that's what you have to do, especially against a team like this."

Maryland would open the second half with momentum and cut Iowa's lead down to 49-45 with 11:57 remaining. But the Hawkeyes would respond back with a 7-0 run to push their lead back to double digits, all while the Terrapins went into a shooting slump and came away with empty possessions.

"I thought one of the critical things was we started going inside," Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said, while also mentioning the role playing 2-3 defense played in the second half. "We started driving the ball so that we did get to the bonus."

Iowa led 66-60 with under two minutes to play and a possession that turned into a busted play ended up becoming a 3-point dagger from senior forward Eric May, who got a clean look at the hoop from the top of the key. May finished with 12 points and also led the Hawkeyes with five assists.

"Zach [McCabe] came out and set a great ball screen, had a great read and it was wide open," May said. "I was confident at that point. Shot clock was going down, needed to take the shot and it felt good leaving."

Now Iowa finds itself playing one final game, getting one final opportunity to pick up one more win. The Hawkeyes will return to Madison Square Garden to face Baylor in the NIT Championship Game. The Bears won the first NIT semifinal of the evening, defeating BYU 76-70, and provide plenty of athleticism across the board. Iowa's game against Baylor will tip off at 8 p.m. Central and will be televised nationally on

ESPN.

“They’re going to challenge us. They’re going to push it,” McCaffery said. “We’re comfortable playing an up-tempo game like that, but this will be a particularly difficult challenge in that regard.”