Hawkeyes rally back to down Mavericks

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – “A rude awakening” is the term used by Iowa freshman guard Peter Jok to describe what was taking place before his eyes, his teammates’ eyes, his coaches’ eyes and the eyes of those inside Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Sunday.

Here were the Hawkeyes at halftime of their second game of the season against Nebraska-Omaha, trailing 43-36 as they went into the locker room. Here were the Hawkeyes allowing the Mavericks to effortlessly attack the glass at the offensive end of the floor, being careless with the basketball and struggling to get in any sort of offensive rhythm themselves.

Before it became too reminiscent of Iowa’s loss to Campbell in 2011, junior forward Aaron White did the talking at halftime for head coach Fran McCaffery.

“I made some comments in the locker room before Coach came in saying, ‘You know, it’s not just going to turn around because we were meant to win this game. You have to go out there, make some plays and make it happen,'” White said he told his teammates before they came out for the second half.

It’s safe to say his message got across. Iowa came out far more aggressive in the second half and once the Hawkeyes reclaimed the lead, they didn’t look back as they defeated Nebraska-Omaha 83-75 to move to 2-0 in this 3-day-old season.

White and senior guard Devyn Marble led the Iowa charge, mainly by attacking and getting to the free-throw line. The duo accounted for 26 of the 49 free throws attempted by the

Hawkeyes in this contest, with White going 10-of-12 from the foul line en route to a 20-point, 15-rebound performance and Marble getting 11 0f his 15 points courtesy of the charity stripe. In fact, Marble attacked the basket on Iowa's opening possession of the second half and drew contact.

Those 49 free-throw attempts – 31 of which came during the second half – came one week after Iowa shot 50 free throws in an exhibition contest against Augustana College.

"I'd love to get that every game," McCaffery said of the high number of free-throw attempts. "I don't know if we can count on that every game. I do think it's going to be a point of emphasis where we can drive and throw it inside.

"It's got to be a combination. It's not all drives, it's not all post feeds. It's a combination of both."

The Hawkeyes received 35 points from their bench on the afternoon, and perhaps no one played a more vital role outside of White or Marble for them Sunday than sophomore guard Anthony Clemmons. Offensively, he was efficient in shooting 4-of-6 from the floor and tallying 11 points. Defensively, Clemmons set the tone with a pair of blocked shots and a steal. He wound up playing 25 minutes off the bench for Iowa, including the last 15:28 of the contest.

"He was big time," Marble said of Clemmons. "Real big time. He gave me the ability to go out there on the wing and be able to be more aggressive attacking the basket, which is why I was able to shoot so many free throws today.

"He played a big part, especially defensively with us just getting into our sets and stuff like that."

Trailing 61-56 with 9:56 remaining, Marble re-entered the game and was on the floor with White, Clemmons, junior center Gabe Olaseni and sophomore forward Jarrod Uthoff. The Hawkeyes went on a 6-0 run and took a 62-61 lead when Clemmons made a lay-up

and forced the Mavericks to burn a timeout.

Nebraska-Omaha would tie the game at 66-66 before Clemmons came right back and drained a 3-pointer to give Iowa a 69-66 advantage that later ballooned to double-digits late in the second half and wasn’t relinquished.

Senior forward Zach McCabe also finished in double-figures scoring with 12 points, while Uthoff had nine points and seven rebounds and senior forward Melsahn Basabe came away with seven points plus nine boards.

“You can’t take any opponent for granted, that’s a big lesson you can learn from this game,” White said. “Everyone on our schedule is very capable of beating us if we don’t play the right way. Hopefully, that opened our eyes.”

Iowa returns to action Nov. 14, when it plays host to Maryland-Eastern Shore. Tip-off from Carver-Hawkeye Arena is set for 6 p.m. Central and the game will be televised nationally on the Big Ten Network.