

COMMENTARY: Making sense of a massacre (premium)

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – There was never a doubt Iowa would beat Abilene Christian on Sunday. But the manner in which the Hawkeyes did – by 62 points – can be viewed from numerous perspectives.

To use a medieval analogy, what happened Sunday inside Carver-Hawkeye Arena was a pillaging. The onslaught started with senior guard Devyn Marble scoring 15 of Iowa's first 17 points. He finished with 27 points on 9-of-13 shooting.

But here's how ugly this was – Marble and the rest of the Hawkeye starters were taken out at the 15:51 mark of the second half. More than three minutes had passed and Marble by himself had more points than the Wildcats did as an entire team. Throw in freshman guard Peter Jok – who was Iowa's second leading scorer with 15 points – and just those two guards alone were enough to win this game.

Let's take it one step further – Iowa could have gone the entire second half of the game without scoring a single point and it still would have beaten Abilene Christian by two possessions (46-41).

The Wildcats came in completely under-sized and just four nights earlier had given Maryland a scare in College Park, Md., knocking down 10 3-pointers and holding a lead in the second half before being shut out the final 14:12 of that contest. That offensive ineptitude carried over into this game, as the Hawkeyes held Abilene Christian to 14-of-54 shooting, including just 3-of-23 from 3-point range.

The question is getting asked about what benefit this serves Iowa and it's a fair question to ask. Granted, the Hawkeyes had no control with this particular game because it was technically part of the Battle 4 Atlantis and Abilene Christian was one of the only Division-I teams that still had an opening on its schedule. But this is the kind of game that could also do a little damage to Iowa's RPI when it becomes later in the season.

From the standpoint of a fan, I would think it's boring to watch the Hawkeyes absolutely pummel an under-sized team like Abilene Christian, a team in its first season as a D-I member. From the standpoint of a media member, yes, these games can get dull to watch from time-to-time because more often than not, you know what to expect.

But with that being said, there is some benefit if you look at it from the perspective of someone like head coach Fran McCaffery or any of his players. Four games into the 2013-14 season, McCaffery has already used 39 different lineups on the court and none of those even include junior guard Josh Oglesby, who is currently rehabbing a foot injury, but should be back in time for Big Ten play. For him, it's a chance to see how guys work with different groups on the floor. For a player like Jok, it was an opportunity to grow as a shooter, even if a lot of his points and open looks were coming at a time when the outcome was well in hand.

This wasn't necessarily an instance where Iowa was trying to run up the score, but McCaffery (understandably so) wasn't going to stand pat and just run time off the clock without trying to accomplish something, either. But it can also be a fine line in a game like this where the discrepancies were so significant across the board – whether it be height, athletic ability, experience, etc.

The competition will get tougher for the Hawkeyes, eventually. Having games like this one and the one three days ago against

Maryland-Eastern Shore are fine as long as there aren't a whole ton of them during non-conference play. That's what happened last year and one would think that shouldn't be the case this year. But only time will tell on that though.