

Uthoff shines as Hawkeyes move to 5-0

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – It was only a matter of time before Jarrod Uthoff feasted on the opposition like he did Friday night. Iowa was able to manhandle Penn 86-55 to move to 5-0 on this young season and Uthoff proved to be one of the biggest reasons why.

Playing just under 22 minutes off the bench, the sophomore forward was simply efficient. Uthoff came away with a team-high 19 points and did it on 6-of-7 shooting from the floor. What made what he did even more intriguing was that he played two long stretches – one in each half – that both lasted over 10 minutes before being subbed back out.

“I like that a lot,” Uthoff said about playing long stretches like he did in both halves Friday. “You get used to the flow of the game and you’re in there. You don’t have to adjust coming off the bench.”

His first entrance into Friday’s contest came when Iowa had just reclaimed the lead from Penn at 14-13 early in the first half. The Hawkeyes went on a 27-12 run during the stretch Uthoff was on the floor, highlighted by a 3-point play where his length allowed him to finish off a dunk and draw contact while doing so.

“That was nice,” senior guard Devyn Marble said. “That was definitely up there on my top 3 or 5 that I’ve seen in person.

“He’s just so long. You don’t really realize it until he’s up there how long he really is. That was a nice play and I hope

he's able to make more plays like that down the stretch."

When he went to the bench with 2:13 remaining before halftime, Iowa was ahead by 16 points and wound up taking a 48-27 lead with it into the locker room.

The second half started similar to the first in that the Quakers had at a run in the beginning. Except unlike the first half, Penn cut Iowa's lead down to 48-34 and it was 52-38 at the under-16 timeout when Uthoff re-entered the game.

It was 53-40 when the biggest momentum shift occurred in Iowa's favor. Junior forward Aaron White, who at this point in the game only had four points, converted a 3-point play to put the Hawkeyes back ahead by 16 points. Moments later, Marble made one of his team-high six steals at the Quaker end of the floor and finished the play with a dunk that made it 58-40 in Iowa's favor.

"This is a team that was not going to go away. They're experienced, they've got size and quickness," Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said about his alma mater, Penn. "We were expecting them to make a run. I would have obviously liked to have made some baskets to start the second half. It would've changed some things. But two guys made two big plays and got the lead back up to 16-17. Then it wasn't so hard."

The Hawkeyes wound up winning this contest by doing two things extremely well – creating turnovers and drawing contact. Penn ended up committing 25 turnovers (17 of them in the first half), which led to 30 of Iowa's points in transition.

The Quakers also committed 29 fouls over the course of the game and the Hawkeyes got to the free-throw line 40 times as a result, knocking down 28 of those attempts. In addition to his 6-of-7 shooting from the floor, Uthoff also knocked down all six of his free throws on the evening.

Iowa's lead reached as many as 31 points with 5:17 remaining

when Uthoff finally exited the game for good.

“The most important thing about him, he has no panic in his game. He just plays,” McCaffery said. “When they’re in zone, I’ll do this. When they’re in man, then I’ll do that. If it’s a running game, then I’ll react accordingly.

“I think that’s the beauty of who he is.”

Now at 5-0, the Hawkeyes now look to showcase their talents next week at the Battle 4 Atlantis in Nassau, Bahamas. Iowa will play three games over the course of three games, beginning Thanksgiving Day with an opening round contest against Xavier. Tip-off is set for 6 p.m. Central and the game will be televised nationally on NBC Sports Network.

The tourney field also features Tennessee and UTEP – with Iowa facing one of those two teams on Black Friday depending on its outcome against Xavier – as well as No. 2 Kansas, Villanova, USC and Wake Forest.

“Just knowing that the competition is going to grow, you’ve got to just be playing with a high intensity and energy level,” Marble said.