

Depth leads to dominance for Hawkeyes over Gophers

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – The topic of depth when it comes to the No. 14 Iowa Hawkeyes has been well-documented, perhaps even overplayed. On Sunday, it's what made a difference for the Hawkeyes and enabled them inside a raucous Carver-Hawkeye Arena to not only beat Minnesota, but end up dominating the Golden Gophers 94-73, en route to reaching 4-1 in Big Ten play and 15-3 overall.

The final score might be a bit misleading. Minnesota played Iowa tough for the majority of the game, but the Hawkeyes continuously got to the free-throw line in the second half and managed to create further separation from the Golden Gophers in the final minutes.

Perhaps making Iowa's win even more impressive though was that it overcame two developments during the first half. One was a 10-point Minnesota lead with just over two minutes remaining in the half. The other was having only one point from senior guard Devyn Marble and zero points from junior forward Aaron White.

This is where that depth comes into play. The star players may not have been scoring for the Hawkeyes, but they got contributions practically across the board. For the second game in a row, junior guard Josh Oglesby came up huge. Following an eight-point performance against Ohio State last week, Oglesby compiled 14 of his 17 points during the first half when the Hawkeyes really needed the scoring and finished the game shooting 6-of-9 from the floor and 5-of-7 from 3-point range.

With 1:13 left before halftime, Minnesota led 43-33. Iowa proceeded to go on an 8-0 run that made it 43-41 when both teams went into the locker room. Six of those points came courtesy of Oglesby's red-hot shooting behind the arc.

"We did not want to go in at halftime with that kind of deficit," McCaffery said. "Josh was obviously really, really good in that period. We went to him and he was on fire. But we also got a few strops. That gave us great momentum."

When the second half began, the Hawkeyes began attacking even more. On the opening possession, Marble attacked the hoop for his first bucket of the game and drew contact in the process. He followed that conventional 3-point play with a pair of 3-pointers that suddenly gave Iowa a 52-46 lead and suddenly gave him 10 points.

"I just wanted to come out and make a statement and get our defense going," Marble said. "I knew the offense would come, so that's why I just stayed patient and looked for my opportunities."

From there, White started to get going. His first bucket came on a putback attempt after Marble missed a 3-point shot. White proceeded to get to the free-throw line 11 times, knocking down 10 of those attempts and finished the game with a team-high 18 points. Marble finished with 16 points on 5-of-14 shooting.

"Dev and I both kind of realized we didn't have a good first half obviously, probably the worst half we've had since we've played together," White said. "We were both aggressive coming out in the second half."

Iowa also received three other notable contributions Sunday. Sophomore guard Mike Gesell had 11 points on 4-of-9 shooting and also delivered a team-high five assists. Junior center Gabe Olaseni, another player who played a role in the Hawkeyes accumulating 43 bench points, had 12 of those points along

with seven rebounds, six of which came at the offensive end of the floor.

“Coach [Kirk] Speraw came over to me before the game and he just told me that he just wants me to play loose and free and not think of anything,” Olaseni said. “This was a good game for me, not in terms of stats, but just playing freely.”

Additionally, senior forward Zach McCabe proved vital in the outcome despite not being one of the five Hawkeyes to reach double figures scoring. Playing 22 minutes off the bench and being used in crunch time with Olaseni and senior Melsahn Basabe both dealing with foul trouble, McCabe provided eight points, five rebounds, three assists and three steals. He also delivered the final blow with a 3-pointer that put Iowa up 22 with just over a minute remaining.

“I was so happy for him,” Gesell said. “Ohio State, he had a rough game offensively. He still made plays for us. He just didn’t have as good of a shooting night as he wanted.

“I think he got back on track a little bit tonight. It was awesome to see him hit that last 3 and he’s just a competitor.”

When the next polls are released Monday, there’s a strong possibility Iowa moves into the top 10, as teams currently ranked between 8th-9th and 11th-13th all suffered at least one defeat over the past week.

Whatever the Hawkeyes’ ranking is, they’ll be taking that with them to Ann Arbor, Mich., on Jan. 22 for their next tilt against Michigan, who sits at 5-0 in league play after beating No. 3 Wisconsin 77-70 in Madison on Saturday. Tip-off from the Crisler Center is scheduled for 6 p.m. Central and the game will be televised nationally on the Big Ten Network.