

Hawkeyes fall flat in loss to Michigan

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

ANN ARBOR, Mich. – For the first time in 12 years, the Iowa Hawkeyes played a basketball game as a nationally ranked top 10 team. The distinction of being ranked 10th in this week's AP poll will be short-lived, however, after Iowa fell 75-67 to No. 21 Michigan on Wednesday at Crisler Center.

It wasn't necessarily that Iowa (4-2, 15-4) played content with what it had already accomplished. The Hawkeyes only trailed by four points at halftime and lost by eight on the road to a ranked team in league play.

But a few factors led to Iowa's demise. One of those factors was Michigan guard Nik Stauskas, who finished with a game-high 26 points on 8-of-14 shooting, including 4-of-9 from behind the 3-point line.

"I think the amazing thing about him has been his consistency all year," Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said. "He's obviously somebody that everybody marks when they get ready to play Michigan. Yet he's still able to get shots out of the offense, get shots on his own.

"He's tremendous."

Another factor was key players looking impressive for halves rather than a full game. Leading the charge for Iowa in the first half was senior forward Melsahn Basabe, who scored 11 of the Hawkeyes' first 17 points of the game. He only scored two points in the second half, however.

Conversely, junior forward Aaron White had one point (a free

throw in the final seconds) in the first half, this coming just three days after Minnesota held him scoreless for an entire half. He, too, would finish the game with 17 points, including 14 of Iowa's last 16 points in the contest. It started with Iowa trailing 62-51 and the Hawkeyes got within three points as a result of White's late scoring.

But even with that, plus team-highs of seven rebounds and four assists, White expressed disappointment afterwards.

"It was kind of unacceptable that it was the second game in a row that I hadn't shown up until late," White said. "I don't know what that is. I guess I got to get myself involved more early. I couldn't really get anything to go.

"I thought I took all good shots. They just weren't falling and I'm just really disappointed in my play because both defensively and offensively, I didn't really impact the game until that run late."

Turnovers also played a key role in Michigan taking this game from Iowa, as the Hawkeyes committed 14 of them. Perhaps the biggest turnover in the entire game came inside the 4-minute mark with the Wolverines up 64-60. Sophomore guard Mike Gesell came down with a rebound and got the ball out in transition to senior guard Devyn Marble. Almost as soon as he had possession near mid-court, Marble quickly found sophomore forward Jarrod Uthoff cutting toward the basket, or so he thought.

Instead, his cross-court pass was picked off by Michigan guard Spike Albrecht and just seconds later, Zak Irvin knocked down a 3-pointer that extended the Wolverines' lead back to three possessions at 67-60 with 3:45 left.

"I was trying to get it up to Jarrod quickly and I kind of rushed it," Marble said. "I should have probably kept it and held on to it longer.

"It was a mistake on my part, but we still had a lot of

opportunities to do what we needed to do.”

Finally, there was the bench production (or lack thereof) from Iowa. Three days earlier against Minnesota, the Hawkeyes got 43 of 94 points coming from their bench. Against Michigan, Iowa had just eight bench points for the entire game. The lack of scoring from Hawkeye reserves forced McCaffery to play his starters together for about 19 minutes Wednesday, the longest they had all been on the court together in any game this season.

“The bench was a little bit gun-shy,” McCaffery said. “That’s not typically what those guys are. They come in and play with a reckless abandon that I think is necessary for our team and that’s how I want them to play. I want them to play. I want them to feel free to shoot the ball. Any one of them can shoot the ball.

“We got tentative, made a couple of mistakes and then I thought the momentum was shifting, so I went back with my starters maybe a little quicker than I normally would.”

Iowa looks to bounce back on Jan. 25 when it plays its second contest this month against Northwestern at Welsh-Ryan Arena in Evanston, Ill. Tip-off is scheduled for 11 a.m. Central and the game will be televised nationally by the Big Ten Network.

The Hawkeyes won the previous meeting 93-67 between the two teams back on Jan. 9 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. Since then, the Wildcats have won three of their last four games, including a 63-60 double overtime victory over Purdue on Jan. 21.