

# Hawkeyes find way to victory in Champaign

By Brendan Stiles

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CHAMPAIGN, Ill. – Not often does Iowa find ways to win games over Illinois inside the State Farm Center. But the 15th-ranked Hawkeyes were able to do just that Saturday, securing an 81-74 victory over the Fighting Illini for their first win in 15 seasons at the arena formerly known as Assembly Hall. By winning this game, Iowa remains alone in third place of the Big Ten with a 6-3 league mark and improved to 17-5 overall.

“Finding a way” seems appropriate in describing how the Hawkeyes pulled off this victory over Illinois. Despite having a 21-point lead at one point in the first half, Iowa allowed the Fighting Illini to come back and the Hawkeyes actually trailed 66-61 with 8:33 remaining.

But the mental resolve that wasn’t there for Iowa four nights earlier against Michigan State started to form. Over the game’s final 5:12, the Hawkeyes outscored the Fighting Illini 15-4.

“I think the conversations during the timeouts were big. It wasn’t, ‘We can’t let this lead slip away. We can’t lose this game,’” junior center Gabe Olaseni said. “It was, ‘We’re going to win and this is how we can do it.’”

“When guys like Coach [Fran] McCaffery, Devyn Marble and Aaron White are settling us down like that, those guys are our leaders and it settles everyone else down.”

Iowa went ahead 72-70 on a bucket by sophomore guard Mike Gesell. With 3:04 left, Gesell then went to the free-throw

line and knocked down one of two free throws.

After Illinois cut Iowa's lead down to one point, the game's key moment occurred. Following a missed shot, White attempted to go for an offensive rebound, but saw the ball go right through his hands and Illinois began to move in transition.

Yet just when it appeared the Fighting Illini might go back ahead (and perhaps for good), Marble came up with one of his three steals on the night. Marble then drew contact while making a bucket and knocked down the ensuing free throw to extend the Hawkeye lead to 76-72.

Marble finished with a team-high 17 points and for the second time in three games, all of his points came in the second half.

"I just jabbed and got back, got the steal and once I got the steal, I just saw me and a freshman," Marble said. "I was going to take advantage of him and the opportunity."

Following a missed 3-pointer by the Fighting Illini, junior guard Josh Oglesby attempted to deliver the dagger with a 3-pointer of his own. He missed the shot, but Olaseni came down with the offensive board, one of six he had on the evening and one of a career-high 12 rebounds total for the London native. Olaseni also scored a career-high 15 points, giving him his second double-double in three games.

"He was so lively today," McCaffery said. "I mean, he was all over the place."

Marble then made three more free throws in the final minutes and White came down with a defensive board and secured the win by knocking down a pair of free throws with 24 seconds remaining. White tallied 14 points on 6-of-11 shooting and also had six rebounds for the Hawkeyes.

Iowa now returns home for a pair of games next week, starting

with a rematch against No. 24 Ohio State on Feb. 4 in a 6 p.m. Central game being televised nationally on ESPN. The Hawkeyes won 84-74 in the first meeting between the two teams back on Jan. 12 in Columbus. The Buckeyes enter with a 4-5 Big Ten mark after picking up a 59-58 road win at No. 14 Wisconsin on Saturday.