

COMMENTARY: A complete performance (premium)

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – From the moment Adam Woodbury controlled the opening tip to the moment Anthony Clemmons dribbled out the final seconds before the horn sounded, the No. 17 Iowa Hawkeyes put together as complete a performance as they collectively have all season.

It wasn't just the fact that Iowa defeated No. 10 Michigan 85-67 on its home floor Saturday. It was also the manner of supreme confidence displayed by everyone wearing a Hawkeye uniform.

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery made two comments that were attention-catching. The first was that he felt everyone who played contributed in some shape or form. The other comment was that his team played with an energy Saturday afternoon that it lacked four nights earlier when it lost at home to Ohio State.

Let's address the latter comment first about energy, because the emotion Iowa played with was quite apparent. Whether it was Zach McCabe hitting a 3, Josh Oglesby fighting for a loose ball and getting a timeout called, or Woodbury finishing off a transition dunk, there was plenty of emotion on display from Hawkeye players throughout the game.

Now back to McCaffery's first comment. He said he felt everyone had a hand in winning and there's a valid case for that. Devyn Marble stepped up in a big way Saturday. Defensively, he guarded Michigan's Nik Stauskas and kept him in check way better than anyone on Iowa did when the Hawkeyes

lost to the Wolverines last month. Offensively, Marble was hitting 3-pointer after 3-pointer (six of them, to be exact) and finished with a game-high 26 points.

Mike Gesell played perhaps the best game of his career. Listen to this stat line: Gesell had 10 points, eight assists, four rebounds, three steals and only one turnover. Considering how he struggled the last time these teams met, the Hawkeyes needed a big game out of him Saturday and got exactly that.

When Iowa lost to Michigan on Jan. 22, it had exactly eight bench points. That number tripled on Saturday and one of the best players off the bench was McCabe. In 19 minutes of play, the senior forward had seven points, six rebounds and four assists. He also never turned the ball over. It was as efficient as he had looked in weeks.

With this victory, Iowa got through the most grueling two-week portion of its season with a 2-2 record. Not great in terms of competing for a Big Ten title, but good in terms of remaining ahead of others and positioning itself to get a first-round bye in next month's Big Ten Tournament. When the Hawkeyes put together performances like this, they're capable of beating almost anyone.

Now Iowa gets a little time off before playing its final seven games of the regular season and at this point, it's about finishing strong. The Hawkeyes are capable of doing that, but as demonstrated this week, they're also capable of wilting under pressure.

There shouldn't be much pressure (if any) on Iowa between now and when it heads to Indianapolis, so the challenge here for this team just might be not adding any unwarranted pressure onto itself. Even if the Hawkeyes win out, they would need help, so there's no reason for anyone to sweat over that.

Right now, it's about positioning for March and with performances like what Iowa demonstrated Saturday, the

positioning only improves for the Hawkeyes.