

2/21/2014: Iowa men's basketball notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery addressed the 15th-ranked Hawkeyes' upcoming game against No. 16 Wisconsin during a press conference held Friday, Feb. 21, 2014, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City.

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HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – One of the most unusual weeks in the history of Iowa basketball is about to end.

The 15th-ranked Hawkeyes saw a 50-pound piece of metal not only postpone their contest at Indiana earlier this week, but also see that game plus another home game later in the season rescheduled Friday morning. Iowa will now visit Assembly Hall in Bloomington, Ind., on Feb. 27 to make up that game against the Hoosiers. In addition, a game against Purdue previously slated for March 1 will now happen March 2, allowing the Hawkeyes to avoid playing three games in five days next week.

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery and his players spent Friday

reflecting back on the week that was – from where they were when the announcement first came about their game against Indiana being postponed, to what they were doing to kill time before returning home from Bloomington.

Junior forward Aaron White said he found out about the postponement through Twitter. Junior guard Josh Oglesby said he was in his room taking a nap when fellow junior Gabe Olaseni called him.

“He told me the game was canceled,” Oglesby said. “I kind of woke up and I was mad at him for waking me up. I didn’t believe him at first.”

Senior forward Zach McCabe had the unfortunate circumstance of having to inform his parents – who made the trip to Bloomington for the game – that it was no longer happening. As the team was preparing to head back, McCabe had found out his parents decided to go up to Indianapolis and hang out there.

“My parents drove down and they had just got into Bloomington when I called them and told them the game had gotten canceled and they were kind of bumming out,” McCabe said. “So I was hanging out with them in the lobby for a little bit and was talking to them.

“They’re trying to make it to every away game this year. My dad didn’t think it was that big of a deal, but I was kind of feeling bad for them.”

This wasn’t the first road ordeal Iowa has had this season. The Hawkeyes had issues flying home from the Bahamas following the Battle 4 Atlantis and also got stuck overnight in Ann Arbor after playing Michigan last month due to inclement weather.

Now with the make-up at Indiana taking place two nights after Iowa visits Minnesota, the Hawkeyes made the decision – which was approved by UI administration – to fly directly to

Bloomington from Minneapolis following their game against the Golden Gophers.

“It has been a unique year in that sense,” McCaffery said. “We’ve spent so much time and we have the resources to put money behind it to try and minimize those situations.

“We’re taking charter planes and staying in nice places and eating well. Obviously, the theory being over the course of a long season, it’s going to be very helpful to you. I think there is no question it has been.”

Rekindling a heated rivalry

If there’s any consolation for the Hawkeyes after what occurred earlier in the week, they immediately got to shift their attention to a game the players have long been looking forward to.

Tensions were high the last time Iowa and Wisconsin met back on Jan. 5 in Madison. The Hawkeyes held an 11-point lead at halftime, only to surrender it back to the Badgers and in the process see McCaffery get ejected for arguing with officials. McCaffery then went on to serve a one-game suspension as a result of his antics that evening inside the Kohl Center.

Immediately following that 75-71 loss to Wisconsin, White said how he was “sick of losing to teams they were better than.” On Saturday, he and the Hawkeyes get an opportunity at revenge when No. 16 Wisconsin visits Carver-Hawkeye Arena in a game scheduled to tip off at 11 a.m. CT on ESPN2.

At the moment, Iowa sits at 8-4 in league play – a half-game ahead of the 8-5 Badgers for third place in the Big Ten. A win creates further separation for the Hawkeyes. A loss not only drops Iowa behind Wisconsin in the standings, but also gives the Badgers a season sweep, which could prove costly in any potential season-ending tiebreakers for next month’s Big Ten Tournament.

"I love playing them," White said. "There is a rivalry between us and obviously, this game means a lot more than it has with the standings behind it.

"Obviously, we've got to pay them back for what happened up there and I just like playing against them. I like playing against the best."

When Wisconsin beat Iowa last month, the Badgers were undefeated and ranked fourth nationally at the time. Since then, they've only won six of their last 11 contests, but enter Saturday's showdown on a 4-game winning streak that includes victories over both No. 13 Michigan State and (most recently) No. 20 Michigan.

"They went through a little bit of a rough shooting stretch after they played us," senior guard Devyn Marble said. "Now they're starting to shoot the ball better in the past few games that they have won, so I think that's the difference in their team now.

"They're playing with a little bit more confidence and guys are shooting the ball better, making plays."