

# COMMENTARY: Defense becoming a concern for Iowa (premium)

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*HawkeyeDrive.com*

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Three days after scoring only 46 points against No. 22 Ohio State, Minnesota proceeded to drop 95 points on Tuesday en route to a 95-89 win over No. 20 Iowa.

Now in giving credit to the Golden Gophers, they shot the ball extremely well. They finished 30-of-49 from the floor, including 11-of-19 from 3-point range. Give credit where it's due ... up to a certain point, though.

No disrespect to Minnesota, but the fact it scored 95 points on Tuesday said far more about the Hawkeyes' defense. It was bad. Actually, junior forward Aaron White's "baffling" description of how Iowa looked defensively fits better here.

It's one thing to see an offensive juggernaut put on a shooting clinic. But the Golden Gophers were anything but that coming in. This team not only failed to reach 50 points the other night in a game it led at halftime by 10 points, but it also lost to the league's last place team – Illinois – at home just last week.

Minnesota played itself back into the tourney conversation and again, credit where it's due. The Golden Gophers got productive showings from their key guys Tuesday night.

But let's get back to Iowa here. The 95 points allowed is staggering, to say the least. Never mind the fact it's the most points given up in a game by the Hawkeyes this season. It's that it came three days after Iowa allowed Wisconsin to score 79 points against it in Iowa City. And again, this

Minnesota squad wasn't one that was really efficient at the offensive end of the floor coming into this contest.

In the first half alone, the Golden Gophers shot 9-of-11 from behind the 3-point line and had 51 points. Yes, the argument can be made about how they were at home and got hot in familiar surroundings. But this seems a tad bit inexcusable, doesn't it?

Is Iowa better now than it was a season ago? Probably, but that seems like a more difficult question to answer right now because the one thing last year's squad did do well with was playing defense.

Not to single out players, but it kind of starts with the leaders on this team. Yes, Devyn Marble had a stellar shooting performance accumulating 24 points on 8-of-15 shooting and yes, White put together an outing of 21 points on 8-of-11 shooting and nine rebounds. Offensively speaking, these guys, along with Mike Gesell and Josh Oglesby did enough to keep Iowa in position of winning.

But defensively was a different story. Of the 95 points scored by Minnesota on Tuesday, 91 of them came with Marble on the floor and 80 of them with White on the floor. In terms of common sense, it makes sense because Marble and White both played over 34 minutes against the Golden Gophers. But 91 and 80 aren't necessary numbers you want to see with these guys in terms of points allowed, especially in a game where Iowa loses.

Now the biggest question is this – Can Iowa make the proper adjustments defensively over the course of 48 hours? Because another hostile environment awaits the Hawkeyes when they play at Indiana on Feb. 27. Like the Golden Gophers, the Hoosiers have guards who can shoot the ball from outside. They're also a turnover-prone team, so opportunities are going to be there for the Hawkeyes to force turnovers and get out in transition,

something they couldn't really do Tuesday with Minnesota shooting 30-of-49.

Two things seem clear. One is that any team who can knock down outside shots like the Golden Gophers did is capable of beating Iowa. It's something that has held true in most of the Hawkeyes' defeats and Tuesday proved to be no exception. The other is that the defensive end of the floor needs to be addressed now and needs to develop some sort of consistency, otherwise Iowa will likely be looking at a very brief showing in the NCAA Tournament next month.