

# COMMENTARY: Short-term fixes a sign of encouragement (premium)

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*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – After 29 games, it's safe to say what the identity of a college basketball team is. It's safe to say where that team stacks up among its closest competitors, whether or not it can make a deep run in the NCAA Tournament and if it can't, what the ultimate downfall will be.

In that sense, nothing has changed with the No. 20 Iowa Hawkeyes. Even though they managed to end a three-game losing streak Sunday by beating Purdue 83-76 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, the long-term warts remain.

But that doesn't mean short-term fixes aren't being done and the ones that are being done worked Sunday afternoon. Part of that might be the fact Purdue is now tied for last place in the Big Ten. Part of it is also Iowa making adjustments from those previous defeats against No. 14 Wisconsin, Minnesota and Indiana.

Those adjustments weren't even so much the players, but the coaching. This was the kind of game where head coach Fran McCaffery and his staff showed they could make changes that maybe seem necessary at this point in time.

While the rotation wasn't actually trimmed down – 10 players saw the floor for Iowa on Sunday – the minutes weren't as intentionally evened out and there wasn't any sort of confusion with lineups that were used. The only new lineup seeing the floor together was for five seconds in the second

half and only because junior forward Aaron White missed the second of a pair of free-throw attempts when sophomore Jarrod Uthoff was set to check in for him.

Senior forward Zach McCabe and sophomore guard Anthony Clemmons played limited roles against Purdue. Meanwhile, White played the entire second half and junior guard Josh Oglesby was on the floor for the game's final 16:32. Additionally, senior guard Devyn Marble played the final 11-and-a-half minutes and sophomore guard Mike Gesell was out there for the final nine minutes.

A late-game lineup featuring those four players who saw the bulk of the second half minutes might not be what always gets played by McCaffery going forward, but the pattern in which he should consider using such guys in late-game situations makes sense right now. In other words, this isn't going to propel Iowa toward a Final Four run, but it will allow the Hawkeyes to close out the games (like Sunday's) where many expect them to win.

The other thing McCaffery did that suggested he could adjust for the better was after he lit into his team early in the second half during a timeout, he then remained composed the rest of the way. That hasn't always been the case in games like Sunday's where it came down to the final minutes. But Iowa also wasn't winning the majority of its close games, either.

Again, this can't be emphasized enough. The blueprint for beating Iowa hasn't changed and won't change. The way the Hawkeyes have lost previous games this season will likely be how they exit the NCAA Tournament later this month. But they've also re-discovered playing to their strengths, which is what they did against Purdue and what they need to continue doing in order to avoid their season ending sooner than desired.

If nothing else, it should leave encouragement inside the fan base that a deep tourney run is still in this team.