

# Hawkeyes booted early from Indy

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – An early exit wasn't what the Iowa Hawkeyes had in mind when they arrived at Bankers Life Fieldhouse. But their ongoing regression remained that and after one night, Iowa is no longer in the Big Ten Tournament.

After beating Northwestern twice during the regular season – by 26 points both times, for that matter – the sixth-seeded Hawkeyes were bounced by the 11th-seeded Wildcats Thursday night, falling 67-62. Northwestern advances to the quarterfinals, where third-seeded Michigan State awaits it. Iowa on the other hand fell to 20-12 as a result of the defeat and has now lost six of its last seven games dating back to Feb. 22.

“They feel awful, I feel awful,” Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said. “I think from where I sit, I’m the one who feels the worst because I’m the one that needs to be able to figure out how I can help them and that’s what my staff’s job is.”

Before departing Iowa City, the Hawkeyes talked about being reinvigorated after getting a chance to regroup and work on fundamentals as opposed to more game prep. Yet whatever progress they thought was made didn't show Thursday.

Once again, porous defense wound up being Iowa's downfall. Northwestern was able to shoot 52.3 percent (23-of-44) from the floor Thursday, including 11-of-23 from behind the 3-point line. One such 3-pointer came at the very end of the first half when Northwestern overcame a 28-21 deficit to tie the

game at 31-31 apiece at halftime following a 3 as the buzzer sounded from Tre Demps.

"The one thing they do do well is knock shots down and we gave them too many open looks in my opinion," senior guard Devyn Marble said after posting a game-high 25 points on 8-of-18 shooting. "They did a good job of knocking them down."

Iowa squandered that lead despite a huge performance off the bench from sophomore forward Jarrod Uthoff being the reason why the Hawkeyes had the advantage in the first place. Playing 22 minutes off the bench, Uthoff tallied 17 points on 5-of-6 shooting from the floor and also hauled down a team-high nine rebounds.

But despite those efforts, the other contributions were few and far between. Junior forward Aaron White scored the Hawkeyes' first five points of the game, only to not take another single shot after doing so. The rest of Iowa's starting lineup combined for just two points.

Yet the underlying theme of the evening remained the defense, or in this case, lack thereof.

"We have to execute better and bring more energy and intensity," senior forward Melsahn Basabe following a forgetful evening where he only played nine minutes and had just one point to go along with six rebounds. "We have to demand more of ourselves."

With their Big Ten tourney run severely cut short, the Hawkeyes now await Selection Sunday, when it's expected to be announced that Iowa will make its first trip back to the NCAA Tournament since a heartbreaking 64-63 loss in 2006 to Northwestern State. The Hawkeyes' first game in the tourney would take place either March 20 or 21 at a site to be determined.

"I think our body of work clearly relates to an NCAA bid,"

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said.

### **Playing for P-Mac**

Iowa wore warm-up shirts Thursday that said "P-Mac" on the front and #teampat with the No. 22 on the back.

The T-shirts were a way of paying respect to Fran McCaffery's 13-year-old son, Patrick, who is scheduled to have surgery next week to remove a tumor from his thyroid.

"We love Pat and we're all behind him, whatever the situation turns out," sophomore guard Mike Gesell said. "We're a big family here."

Fran and his wife Margaret broke the news of Patrick's health to the team on Monday, one day before news of his condition became public knowledge.

"I'll never forget Devyn Marble putting his arms around me, 'We love you, Coach. It's going to be O.K.," Fran said when asked after Thursday's game about the players wearing the shirts.

Fran then said he received a voicemail from junior guard Josh Oglesby that night and that he was the one who suggested to him the idea of wearing the shirts this weekend.

"I had my wife speak with Josh. She was thrilled and Patrick was thrilled," Fran said. "Again, it tells you about the kind of people that we have and I just can't say enough how much I love them."