

Clark Sparks No. 3 Iowa's Comeback For Big Ten Tourney Title Three-Peat In 94-89 OT Win Over Nebraska

by Dave Campbell
March 11 2024 9:27 AM



MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Caitlin Clark overcame a cold start to score 30 of her 34 points after halftime and help third-ranked Iowa rally past Nebraska 94-89 in overtime to win a third straight Big Ten Tournament on Sunday.

“It never gets old cutting the net,” Clark said after black and gold confetti covered the court at Target Center to the delight of another sellout crowd packed with Hawkeyes fans. “I feel like we’re pretty good at that.”

Hannah Stuelke had 25 points and nine rebounds for Iowa (29-4), which trailed by 13 points late in the first half while their superstar Clark missed all nine of her 3-point attempts.

“You can maybe keep Caitlin down for a half. You’re not keeping her down for a whole game,” Hawkeyes coach Lisa Bluder said.

The [all-time NCAA leading scorer](#) finished 5 for 17 from deep, had 12 assists, and hit the dagger 3-pointer with 51 seconds left in OT for an 89-87 lead just 16 seconds after Logan Nissley’s 3-pointer put the Cornhuskers in front.

“I knew some shots were going to go in,” Clark said. “That’s just how it works.”

Alexis Markowski had 23 points and 13 rebounds to lead Nebraska (22-11) in a valiant performance that fell short of a second victory over Iowa this season. The Huskers beat the Hawkeyes [82-79 on Feb. 11](#).

“Nobody else did, but we expected to win,” said Nebraska coach Amy Williams, who had tears streaming down her face at the postgame interview podium as she praised Nissley’s effort after her red-eyed players choked up during some of their remarks.

Natalie Potts, a 2023 graduate of Incarnate Word Academy from O’Fallon, Mo., had 21 points and nine rebounds for the Huskers, who led 75-67 with 2 1/2 minutes to go in regulation before Clark drained one of her signature stepback 3-pointers. Her layup in traffic tied the game with 29 seconds left.

Nebraska played for the final shot, and Nissley’s baseline jumper was short at the buzzer. Clark waved her arms at the Iowa-dominated sellout crowd, yelling: “Come on! Five more minutes!”

The Hawkeyes were well aware of Jaz Shelley — who had 16 points and 13 assists — on that last possession of regulation after the Australian hit a 3-pointer with 30 seconds left in their last meeting.

“They tightened things up,” Williams said. “I would’ve, too.”

The Huskers played their fourth game in four days, beating Purdue, Michigan State, and Maryland to reach the conference final for the first time in 10 years. Despite the 11 a.m. Central tipoff and the lost hour for the daylight saving time clock change, they sure didn't lack for energy.

These regional rivals — one fan clutched a clever sign that read, “Iowa has better corn!” — from the conference's soon-to-be-stretched-way-out western edge played a rugged and fierce game befitting their grind-it-out matchups on the football field. Bodies banged hard against the floor often, and the pushing for position around the basket was intense.

Markowski and Potts, the Big Ten Freshman of the Year award winner, played fearlessly inside after Iowa commanded a 54-16 points-in-the-paint advantage on Michigan the day before. Clark mostly found her usual playable looks at the hoop, but the long ball just wasn't her friend. The Hawkeyes matched every bit of the Huskers' fire, though, and made sure they stayed within striking range by getting the ball to the basket as much as they could and locking down on defense.

“That's probably what I'm most proud of, that we found a different way to win,” Clark said.

Clark immediately bit into Nebraska's 46-35 halftime lead by hitting a stepback jumper from the foul line. Her first deep shot finally fell when she drifted right off the break and swished a pullup from the wing to bring Iowa within 48-42, and she pumped her fist with a slight smile on the way back.

Curling off high screens was a recipe for success. Clark gave the Hawkeyes their first lead since 5-4 when she did just that off a pass from Kate Martin — who hit all three of her 3-pointers after the third quarter — and smoothly drove in for a layup that made it 53-52.

Martin, a 2018 graduate of Edwardsville High School, finished the game with 13 points and seven rebounds against Nebraska.