

Iowa beats UConn for 2K Empire Classic title

NEW YORK (AP) -- Iowa learned a lot last season. The Hawkeyes are putting those lessons to good use right now.

Tyler Cook scored 26 points, Luka Garza had 22 and Iowa beat Connecticut 91-72 in the 2K Classic championship game on Friday night.

The Hawkeyes went 14-19 last season, losing to Michigan in the Big Ten tournament. But they shot 51 percent (29 for 57) from the field while improving to 4-0 this year.

Cook said the biggest difference is the team is more together for this campaign.

"We're more connected on both ends of the floor," he said. "And we're playing for one another and our coaching staff and our program with more pride than we did a year ago."

Garza was named MVP of the tournament. He also joined Cook, UConn's Eric Cobb, Oregon's Bol Bol and Syracuse's Jalen Carey on the all-tournament team.

Bol led No. 13 Oregon to an 80-65 victory over No. 15 Syracuse in the consolation game. He finished with 26 points and nine rebounds on his 19th birthday.

Payton Pritchard had 18 points for the Ducks (3-1), and Kenny Wooten scored 12 in the first-ever meeting between the ACC and Pac-12 programs.

"We competed," Oregon coach Dana Altman said.

Syracuse (2-2) lost on consecutive nights, also falling 83-76 to UConn on Thursday night. The Orange shot 35 percent (18 for 51) from the field.

Tyus Battle scored 17 points for Syracuse, and Elijah Hughes and Jalen Carey each had 14.

"We tried things but none of them seemed to work very well," coach Jim Boeheim said. "We tried different sets, different movements, different perimeter things, subbing people out, setting ball screens and all of those things (but) sometimes if the ball doesn't go in, none of that works."

Iowa improved to 3-1 all-time against UConn. It was the first meeting between the schools since Iowa's 70-68 win on Nov. 11, 1999, also at Madison Square Garden.

"It's an honor -- I think I speak for all of us -- to be able to come and play in such a historical arena, such a historical city, so much basketball history," Cook said. "The fact that we were able to come into this environment and play against two really good teams and come out with two really good victories I think it speaks to our growth as a unit."

Jalen Adams led the Huskies (3-1) with 20 points. Cobb finished with 16.

UConn coach Danny Hurley was ejected with 1:44 left. He received his first technical foul earlier in the half.

"I did not like the job I did getting my team ready for today," Hurley said.

UConn trimmed Iowa's lead to 33-22 on Adams' layup with 4:15 left in the first half. But Iowa responded with a 10-5 spurt for a 43-27 halftime lead.

"We took our pain that came with last year and used it as motivation this summer to come out here and be a better team," Garza said. "We did a good job at that on every aspect. Just really proud of our guys. Everybody who came here stepped up."