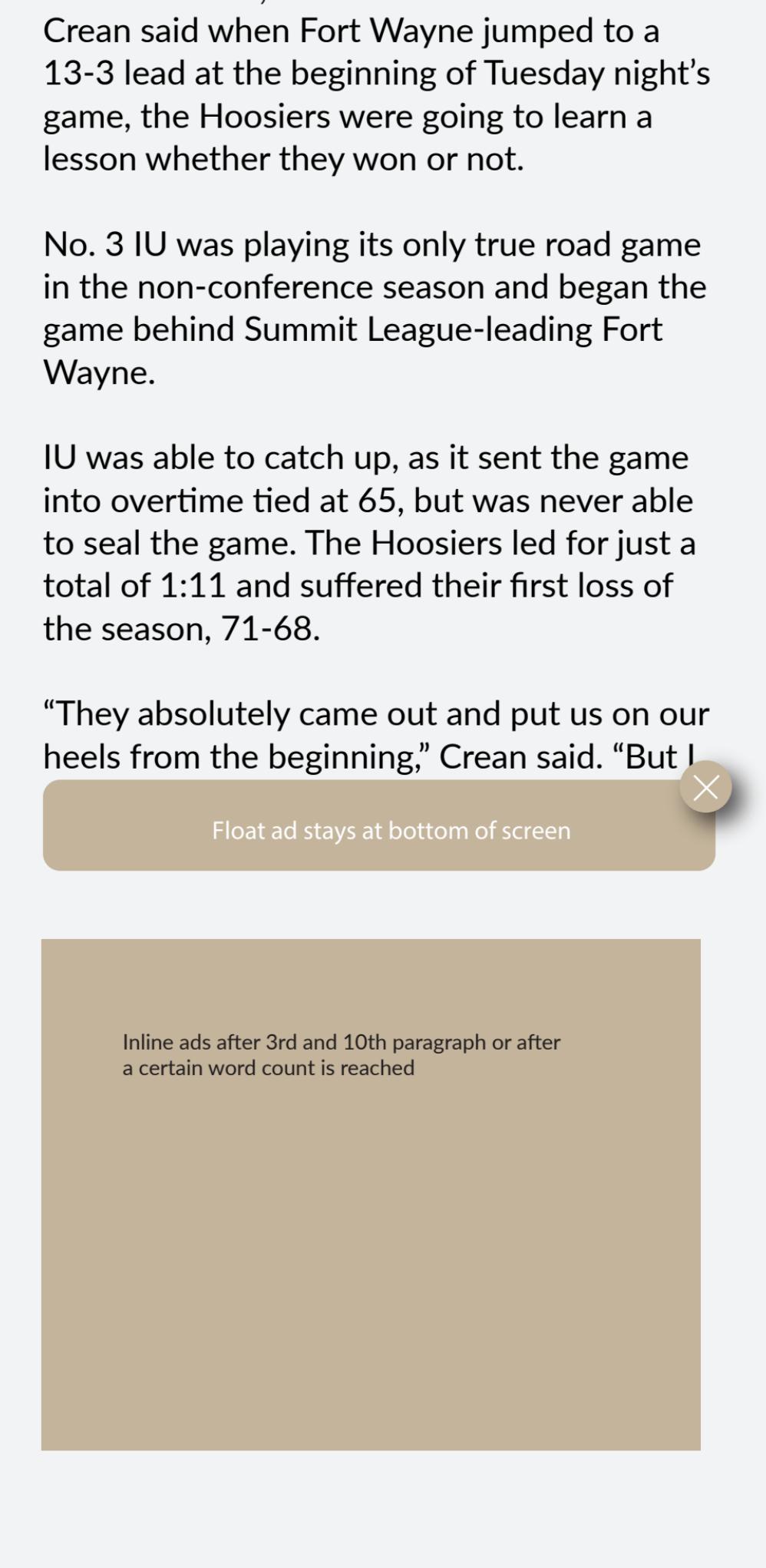


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Sophomore center Thomas Bryant takes a free throw against UMASS Lowell Nov. 16. The Hoosiers beat the River Hawks 100-78. Bryant was five-for-six from the line Sunday against Southeast Missouri State in the Hoosiers 83-55 win. [VICTOR GROSSLING Buy Photos](#)

BASKETBALL

IU still searching for leadership, communication after Fort Wayne loss

By [Taylor Lehman](#)
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FORT WAYNE, INDIANA — IU Coach Tom Crean said when Fort Wayne jumped to a 13-3 lead at the beginning of Tuesday night's game, the Hoosiers were going to learn a lesson whether they won or not.

No. 3 IU was playing its only true road game in the non-conference season and began the game behind Summit League-leading Fort Wayne.

IU was able to catch up, as it sent the game into overtime tied at 65, but was never able to seal the game. The Hoosiers led for just a total of 1:11 and suffered their first loss of the season, 71-68.

"They absolutely came out and put us on our heels from the beginning," Crean said. "But I

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The game was advertised in Fort Wayne as the biggest game in the program's history. The Mastodons hadn't hosted a team ranked higher than No. 5.

[[IU begins final regular season stretch at Minnesota](#)]

And Fort Wayne came out firing, scoring 38 points in the first half and pushing its lead to as large as 10 before halftime.

When IU scored, Fort Wayne had an answer, and the Mastodon lead that seemed like it wouldn't last long ended up lasting until the 16-minute mark of the second half.

The Hoosiers' largest lead was three points, when sophomore center Thomas Bryant scored the game's opening points on a 3-pointer.

Even when IU tied Fort Wayne in the second half, the Mastodons were able to rebuild the lead to its largest count of the game later in the half. Then the Hoosiers turned the ball over 15 times, allowing Fort Wayne to score 12 points off those turnovers — IU only had two points off eight turnovers.

The Hoosiers were never able to cap the Mastodons.

The struggles, Crean said, boiled down to communication and leadership on both ends of the court.

"We have nobody on our team who's ever been responsible for somebody else," Crean

Said. "We don't have the guys that can take the bull by the horns and lead the other guys through the thick and thin."

That's something that doesn't happen overnight, Crean said. It has to be built over time.

Crean said he'd expect the leadership and the "bull by the horns" mentality to come from the upperclassmen on the team, but the reason it doesn't consistently come from them is that they don't have enough confidence in their own games. They haven't produced successfully for a long period of time.

The same thing happened last season, Crean said, when IU struggled to win early in the season but found a way to lead from within — a player driven leadership rather than a coach-driven leadership.

That player-driven leadership wasn't there against Fort Wayne.

"I had no illusions that our leadership was where it needed to be or that we were as mature as we needed to be when we were winning against Kansas in Hawaii," Crean

said. "The bottom line is how better you can get and how willing you are to get better."

Getting better, Crean said is moving the ball with more ease, creating opportunities on offense instead of surrendering 11 steals and allowing junior guard James Blackmon to score more than 13 points.

Crean wants to capitalize on post play, something the Hoosiers and sophomore center Thomas Bryant weren't able to do against Fort Wayne. The Mastodons out-scored them in the paint, 40-30.

Moving the ball, Crean said, instead of allowing seven blocks and recording just 12 assists. That's what communication can accomplish and what player-driven leadership can facilitate.

"We needed to make the next pass," Crean said. "And I'm ashamed of that. That's not how we play."

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