

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball

Q. When you look at Drake, maybe record-wise they're not there yet but they're competitive and he's got guys he seems to like. What are you seeing from them?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They've continued to improve; they run good stuff. He's got three very talented scorers. He's got a couple big kids that are impressive. He's got some athletes on the wing, so you can see him kind of putting it together piece by piece. He plays 11 guys, so he's had some really good recruits.

It's a team that's been impressive. They had a tough overtime loss at Tulane, a game that they played tremendously well in, and then an overtime win over Western Kentucky, a big-time win in a tournament situation. This is a team that has really impressed me on film.

But I'm not surprised. I have a lot of respect for Ray and his body of work, and you're seeing it come to fruition.

Q. Timmer, 19 points a game?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's terrific, but I think what makes him so good is Abrahamson and Woodward are equally talented. Offensively, they can all get their own. They run stuff for them. He does a really good job of going to them and mixing it up.

But you know, Olejniczak and Enevold have really stepped up their game. I mean, that's a game changer when you have two seven-footers who can play with those scorers, and then you've got your athletes on the wing that can do some things.

Q. Is ball pressure a key with Timmer?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's a key, with him, with Woodward, with Abrahamson. With those guys, you give them space, they're going to score.

Q. Bo Ryan decided to hang it up for good yesterday, late last night. He's obviously been an iconic coach for the last 15 years or so in the Big Ten. Just talk a little bit about the challenges of facing Bo Ryan over the years and what he's brought to college basketball.



FRAN McCAFFERY: He's done a fabulous job there. It's hard to do what he did once, one year, and to do it consistently well in this league is very difficult. And I think that's what has been impressive to me because I've watched him from afar before I came into the league. I coached against him once when I was at UNC Greensboro. He came in and put his style in place, and they've been consistently good.

Like I said before when we talked about it at Big Ten Media Day in October, they said, what do you think about it, I said, well, it's really not my position to think about it. I want him to be able to retire when he wants to retire and go out his way. I think we would all like to do that, and we don't always get the chance to do that.

Q. With a veteran team like you have, do you feel better about them moving on from such a hard loss?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I would like to think so, but I don't really look at that to be honest with you. I look at the situation. It's the next game on our schedule. We have to play well. We want to win to get better. We're playing a really good team that we have a lot of respect for in an excellent environment. Whether you win or you lose, you've got to move on, and that's how I look at it.

Q. Jarrod has had a couple games where he's just been phenomenal in the first half and then he doesn't do as much in the second half. Are teams adjusting to him? Is fatigue a factor?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They get into him more. I think fatigue could have been more of a factor on Thursday than maybe in some of the other games. Maybe not so much the Dayton games. Those games I shorten my bench in the second half, so it could be a factor. It's something we looked at as a possibility.

And then you break it down, can we get him shots in different locations, can we get him the ball more, do other people have to do more things to open things up for him. There's just so many things you look at.

But I haven't seen too many performances like that in a half. I don't think I've ever seen any. So I know he feels bad about what happened in the second half, but I feel worse because I feel like, okay, what could I have done to help him. We went to him a few times, like I said,

should we have gone to him more? Should we have tried to post him up more, tried to get him to the foul line, things like that. I probably feel worse about it than he does.

Q. It appears that he's better off the dribble and the cross-over and things like that. How much is that what he did in the off-season?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's always had that in his game. He just has more of an opportunity now. Last year you had Aaron White, the year before that you had Aaron White, Mel, Dev. So he's taking a lot more shots. He's taking 41 more shots than the next closest guy on the team and a lot more than that for everybody else. So I think you're just seeing what he's always had in his game. He's always wanted to have the flexibility to do that. He didn't look at himself as a stretch 4; he looked at himself as a guy who can rebound and push it on the break. He can break his man down off the dribble and get his own shot. Yes, he can post-up; yes, he can pick and pop; he can pick-and-roll. I think he looked at himself as a guy who has a complete game, and that's how we recruited him, and that's one of the reasons why when he transferred he wanted to play where he would have that opportunity, and we've given that to him.

Q. In some late-game situations you've been reluctant to call time-out, which is obvious at times where there's enough time you have to allow your players the freedom to make shots, take shots. It hasn't always been successful in that manner.

What's kind of your thought process when there's 10 seconds left and you have a guy with the ball?

FRAN McCAFFERY: There are times when you can take a time-out where it might make more sense to take a time-out. If you're playing a team that has -- you're giving them an opportunity to change personnel, change defenses, so you then have to in a time-out give them multiple play-call options, which is really complicated. So if you know who's on the floor and what defense they're in and you have play action called, why do you have to call time-out? You're just going to come out and run what you just called.

Everybody always says, what did you diagram, what ingenious thing did you come up with. Typically you have action, but ultimately somebody has got to make a play because they might take away that action.

Now, in the case that you're talking about, we've got the exact shot we wanted or the exact guy we wanted to shoot it.

So if it gets fumbled or there's a charge or something, you feel, geez, we should have taken a time-out, but I'll always let my guys go. We already have it called, and

there's no reason to have to take one, plus you might need it later. You say, geez, Fran, there's only nine seconds to go. If ever there was a good time to call it, it would be now.

As long as I know that we can get into our stuff and I know exactly what defense they're in and I've called multiple things, I'm going to keep doing it that way.

Q. And not being able to inbound the ball correctly on a couple plays in a row --

FRAN McCAFFERY: When that happened we should have taken a time-out. That's when being at the other end and I can't call it anymore -- but I think in both cases I think if you were to ask Clemmons and Jarrod, they thought they had the ball. They thought they were going to get it in. We've never had trouble getting the ball inbounds. Clemmons threw it at Woody's foot. He didn't try to throw it at his foot but that's where it went. And Jarrod hesitated on the first one, and then the second one, the five-second call, that's when you call it.

I would trust those two guys again in the future to take the ball inbounds. I'm not worried about those two guys. It's unfortunate it happened then.

Q. On that last shot Jarrod was open from the top of the key; you'd probably get a better shot that way than you would have if you had called something else?

FRAN McCAFFERY: In that situation I wanted Jarrod to have the opportunity to shoot the ball; Jarrod or Pete pretty much to be the guy that shoots that. There's a couple different things we run on that action. I chose one. The other one would have gone a little bit more to Pete. Some of it is a little more penetration oriented, so then you're trusting Mike to get to the free-throw line, maybe get to the rim. So we went with that, and I thought it was in, you know, and I have very high confidence in Jarrod in that situation.

Q. Is some of the decisions not to call time-out, does that have to do with the fact you've got veteran players on the court?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It helps, but no. I would say this: it has to do with the fact that you trust your guys. The fact that they're veterans or not, you could have a great point guard who's a freshman. If you have a point guard you don't trust, then you probably have to take a time-out in that situation.

Q. How is Jok's eye?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's fine.

Q. Talk about your freshmen crew academically this semester.

FRAN McCAFFERY: We don't know yet. They still have finals today and tomorrow.

Q. Off of that, with Isaiah and Brandon redshirting, how are they practicing and what are you hoping that -- what area that they get better in this redshirt year?

FRAN McCAFFERY: A lot of times it's you've just got to get more comfortable with the system. Brandon physically is fine. Isaiah needs to get stronger so he needs to get in the weight room with Bill Maxwell. But they have to understand and conceptualize what we're trying to do at both ends, and it's taken them a little bit longer.

Q. Were you ever involved in an in-state classic like this, and how do you like this format?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, when I was at Notre Dame we used to have the Big Four Classic. It was Kentucky, Louisville, Notre Dame and Indiana. We used to play at the Hoosier Dome back in those days, and I remember the first year I went, I came from Lehigh where we would get 800 people a game, and then we had 38,000, and it was a Final Four atmosphere with those teams. And then Kentucky and Indiana split, did their own thing. Now they have the other Big Four Classic with the in-state schools. I never had anything like that other than that.

I think it's a great day for college basketball in the state. I think that's how it was presented and that was the idea from the beginning, that it would be that, and so it'll be a great day.

Q. Ahmad didn't play in the last game --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, that was a mistake. I should have played him, especially in the second half. Just get his athleticism out there, get him some experience. It was just kind of a funny game that way, and I just kind of trusted the more experienced guys. Obviously, I only played seven experienced guys.

Q. How do you feel about the progression of the young guys off the bench because like we were talking about Western Illinois, they scored so many points for you guys.

FRAN McCAFFERY: We're going to need them to be like that, and I think Ahmad can do that, Baer can do that, Ellingson can do that. Certainly Dom Uhl has established himself as one of our key guys. But I think moving forward I think you've got to look at Fleming and Williams as guys we've got to get in there, too.

Q. Have you been able to find somebody who can kind of do what Dale Jones was doing?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's different. No. Maybe Baer because Baer can shoot the three. But Dale is just a

different kind of guy when you look at his ability to score and rebound. As he was figuring out the defensive component of the game, he was becoming more and more effective.

But I guess Baer would be the guy. He had two really good looks at it in the Iowa State game that didn't go in, but he's been shooting the ball really well.

Q. Kind of unusual he was a center and now --

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think he figured out if I'm going to play in college I can't be a center at 6'7" and 205, but I can be an effective 2, 3, 4, and I can guard a 2, I can guard a 4. We actually have played him at center and could play him there. Now depending upon who the other guy is, it might overwhelm him physically, but he's going to front, he's going to fight and he's going to outrun guy, he's going to take him outside, so it's mismatch deal.

Q. Lost among all the things that happened at Iowa State was Jok's performance early in the second half, 14 in his first five minutes?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, he was tremendous, and he has that capability. I'm just continuing to be pleased with his development. He's a terrific kid. I enjoy coaching him.

He's a guy that came in, obviously as you know, as Mr. Basketball, and struggled in the beginning, was our leading scorer on the foreign trip because nobody guarded him because they don't know who he is and he's making every shot, now all of a sudden people are guarding you, and then you've got to figure out how to guard people who are really good who are juniors and seniors, and he couldn't do that, and he was getting outplayed in practice.

And there's two ways to handle that. You can run and hide and transfer, or you can battle and get better and work at it, and I'm just really impressed with his work ethic and the ability to get better in the weight room and get extra shots up and figure out what he needs to do defensively and cut down on his mistakes. I told him his game as a freshman, he had a sloppy game. He would fumble and stumble and run around and just try to shoot jumpers and make that the cure for everything. He needed to become a really good basketball player. I'm really proud of him because you do that when you have character.

Q. His defense seems to have come a long way, too.

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's a lot harder than it looks sometimes physically when you have to run -- when you're a guy who's a scorer and you're running around and you're moving without the ball and you're running

transition and motion, it's back cuts and curl cuts, back to the other side, set a flair screen, and then run down and guard somebody like Gary Harris, okay, that's not easy to do, and then chase him around and then run down and do it again and again and again and again. You've got to be in unbelievable shape, and it was hard for him. He figured that out, and as the season went on, you remember, I mean, he was pretty good the second half of the year, really good in the Tennessee game in the NCAA Tournament, but what he did was, as I said, he figured it out as he went through it. He listened to the coaches, he listened to Marble and all those older guys, Basabe, McCabe, telling him what he need to do.

Ultimately he wants to be good. So if you want to be good, you've got to work, and he worked.

Q. Has the game slowed down for him as he's figured it out?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I guess to a certain extent. I never looked at him as a guy who rushed. He was a guy who worked hard on offense and rested on defense, and you start doing plus-minus, it's not good math.

Q. The fact that Jok does everything else better, it seems to make his shot --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it makes us better, and it makes him feel better about himself, because he has instincts. You'll see him. He'll be in the right place and he'll get deflections and he'll make steals. He had the biggest steal of the game in the Florida State game. It's great to see him making those kind of plays, and he's got to impact the game that way for us to be good, but ultimately he wants to make money playing the game, and you have to be a complete player to do that, and he's a guy that he's on the radar screen. How many guys make shots like he does? But you'd better be able to do some other stuff, and he's doing it.

Q. Has Woodbury changed his free-throw form or is it just reputation? He's hitting 84 percent.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, he's worked at it. His form -- Kirk Speraw is a really good shot doctor. He was a great shooter himself, and he's over the years been a guy -- if you see him do a shooting lecture, it's very impressive. He keeps it simple. So I pretty much when we have a guy that just needs to improve a little bit, I just -- you know how it is. You've coached, you've played. Sometimes everybody wants to tell you do this, put your pinky here, move your elbow here and put your left hand here. Nothing good comes from that.

So I'd prefer to have one voice. You take him, you listen to him, ignore everybody else, and then work. Then he's a worker, as you know, and I'm really proud

of him. But it improved a lot before this year, but we need to be able to keep him in at the end of the game, and we can do that.

Q. What is it about Hilton that makes it so difficult to play in?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think any environment where it's sold out and it's loud, it's going to be difficult. But I always look at it like this: everybody wants to attribute magic to a building. That's a good team. They have good players. If they didn't have good players then you could scream and yell all you want. They wouldn't win. They've got good players. They've got a good coach, and that's what I attribute any magic in any building. It's hard to win at the Breslin Center. It's loud. A lot of loud places aren't that tough, but they're good.

Q. In the Iowa State game are there a lot of positives you're communicating with the team?

FRAN McCAFFERY: There's positive and negative in every game. You cannot let one game define you, so if you win the game, you run and jump on top of each other in the locker room and everybody is telling you how great you are when you walk to Jimmy John's, and now nobody wants to look at you.

But you can't get emotional one way or the other, and I get it, it's hard. Everybody is writing about it. Everybody is tweeting about it, and they're attacking you or they're loving you. But it's such a long journey, you can't get caught up in that. It's easier for me because I've been doing it for 32 years. It's harder for a guy who's young and in the moment, so fortunately we have some older guys, I think, that can handle that.