

# University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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## Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



**Q. Dayton is an impressive team, top-25 team to start the year, 3-0. What have you seen of them so far on tape?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: They've been tremendous for a long time. I think in particular, Arch has done a great job with them the last couple years. They're a team that plays defense. They can play fast. They've got a lot of different weapons, I think, and put pressure on the ball, so they'll challenge our offense with their quickness and their speed and their ability to create offense with their defense. But they also can score. They've got various guys who can score, a number of guys in double figures. They have a real good recruiting class, I think, and that gives you the depth that you're looking for to sustain a lengthy season.

When we signed up for this tournament, we knew we were going to get somebody really good, and we did.

**Q. When you look at the tournament as a whole -- you've been in these tournaments the last few years; the Bahamas was this way last year. How much do you think you're going to know about your team by Sunday night versus what you know maybe today, six days before?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: We'll know a lot more, but that sort of never stops. You keep learning more and more about your team as the season progresses. You play three games in four days against that level of competition, certainly you're going to find out some things.

But just like the other night was the first road test. Now this is a neutral site with great competition, differing styles, three games in four days, and you come right back with the Big Ten/ACC Challenge.

Nothing that we haven't already talked about in terms of what we put together for this team. It's the only way you get better. It's the only way you get it figured out. It's the only way you prepare for the 18 monsters we have got later on.

**Q. When you get into these tournaments, what do you look at? When you look for a tournament, what's the one thing you want the most?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, in this case, I have been there before. I took Siena there before, so it's a first-class event. We're looking for first-class events with quality competition, with maximum exposure. So we'll move around. It used to be, you go back 15 years, there was only a couple of them, and the other ones were just kind of local. But everything changed. There's more destination locations: The Cayman Islands, the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Cancún, Maui, Orlando, Vegas, etc. So it's become a critical component when you're scheduling, okay, what tournaments are you going to go to which years and how is the format.

You know, this is one of the better ones. We had an opportunity to get in it, and we jumped on it.

**Q. When you look at these tournaments, as you mentioned they've kind of exploded --**

FRAN McCAFFERY: It used to be you could only go to one place every four years, and then it changed; you could go every year. So that was a game changer for the folks that run the events, because it used to be if you didn't use your tournament, then you were just getting recruited. You were getting pounded, hey, we need a team, and you're one of the few teams left that could actually come.

**Q. Do you see any pluses or minuses from the fact that everybody gets to do this? Some of your season ticket holders say you're taking good games away from the potential of being at home.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: But the thing is, it's an exempt event, so you're taking one game away -- you get three for one or four for one, so yeah, technically you are, but our fans travel, so we've taken a ton of people to Atlantis, the Garden last year, a fair amount in Cancún as I recall. I'm sure we'll have a bunch down in Orlando.

So I think they like that, too.

**Q. With three games in four days, how do you manage your minutes? Do you have to be careful --**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I go one game at a time. Whatever you have to do to win that game. We've got enough bodies to absorb three games in four days. I'm not worried about that at all. I won't not play a guy in

the first half if I think we need to play that guy in the first half to win that game. So that's how we'll do it.

**Q. The other night against Marquette, your players afterwards, at least your veterans, they almost looked at it as setting an example for your younger players to go out and play as intense as they did on both ends of the court and kind of send a message obviously to themselves that they could play at that level, but then also to the younger teammates that you've got to elevate your level of play to match this. Do you feel like that message was sent in a positive way?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, there's no question. That group has been involved in a lot of great road wins since they've been here. When you're a young player and you've never been on the road, it's different. The whole process, okay, how we travel, where we travel, when we travel, how we put it together, and then you come out on the floor and it's a hostile environment, it's loud and they can't always hear the bench, so you have to hold onto the game plan and execute the game plan to perfection if you want to beat good teams on the road, and that's what those older guys did.

So you know, it was the example of how you do it. In terms of how they prepared mentally, how they processed it, and then how they executed it, and the other guys, they'll just come with you. The young guys will come with you if you have character at the top. I've been doing this long enough.

If you have guys that are concerned about themselves, then it won't work. And we've got great leadership here.

**Q. In a way is it a good sign that you've come out to a 3-0 start? You wouldn't want it to go the other way with the experience and these guys are able to look up to, hey, this is how you win type of thing?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, a lot of times young guys come into a winning program and they just think you're going to win, and what you have to do is kind of get in the locker room, get on the practice floor and travel and figure out how that actually happens. It's a lot harder than you might think, because as a high school senior, think who you're playing against, 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds, and now you're playing against guys who are 21, 22, 23. It's a different world.

Until you go through it, you really don't have any idea, so you try to schedule intelligently and you hope that you have the character at the top like we do and that they set the example that we're talking about.

But ultimately, it comes down to how you compete, and that's the example that we're talking about, because

competing is not hustling. It's hustling and concentrating and executing and not making mistakes and consistently doing that possession after possession and not playing in spurts. You can't go on the road and play in spurts and win. You can't.

And so that for us has so far been good, but we've got a lot more tough games coming up.

**Q. Not only did you win and win decisively, but it's going to be beneficial for maybe the rest of the month where you've got three good teams, no matter who you play down there, Monmouth, UCLA if you play them or what have you, and then also you're going to go on the road and go to Iowa State in a couple weeks, which will be a very hostile environment. Is it beneficial in so many different ways just to get that win?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think that was the thought process behind the event, the Gavitt Games. Not everybody was in favor of it. But when you look at the overall benefit, you know, the interest level that our league and their league got early in the season, and to challenge your team -- now, if you lose the game, you're like, aww, maybe I wish we hadn't done that. But the reality is you have to be smart enough at the front end to say, okay, this makes sense for us. It's a great opportunity to go on the road and play somebody really good and see where we are and figure it out. If we can play really well and win, that's great. If we struggle and we lose, okay, why did we lose, what did we learn from this, how can we get better collectively, how can we get better individually.

You only do that by playing reputable people in situations like that. I think it's wonderful. I mean, you look at the schedule at the front and you say, oh, maybe it was too much considering that we have nine guys that haven't played a lot. But we still had five that did, and Dom's coming around, I think these young guys will be fine. But that's how you get them to where they're going to be good Big Ten players is to play good teams now.

I think what you've seen in particular with most of the guys is that they're improving. You think about them from the first exhibition game to where they are now, they've come a long way, and that was obviously the hope at the start.

**Q. This might seem like an off-the-wall question, but are you guys impacted at all by what the football team is doing? Does it help you guys in recruiting?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: It helps every program here, there's no question about that. We probably had 16 or 17 recruits on the field before the Minnesota game.

There's just no substitute for that atmosphere when you think about -- and some of them were here for the wrestling match, as well. I mean, I don't know if anybody could have done what we did that day as an institution and department.

But the publicity they are getting every night is great publicity for our school, for our athletic department, and everybody is talking about the Hawkeyes, so that's something we're very proud of, we take great pride in, and we're just thrilled for Kirk and his staff and players. It is really hard to do what they've done. We're all very proud of them and rooting for them to keep it going.

**Q. Will you guys watch the Nebraska game earlier in the day, Iowa-Nebraska?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: We'll be focused on playing. We'll have pregame meal and walk-throughs and shootaround and all that, but anything short of that, it will be on, no question.

**Q. How do you like the play of Mike so far? He's taken almost another step towards becoming a great --**

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know Mike is one of the hardest workers I've ever been around, so he was not going to relax after last year. He played great, was on a really good team, but he wants to go out the right way, and he worked unbelievably hard in spring, summer, fall. He's in phenomenal shape. You know, he knows I trust him completely, and it's his team.

Now, he also loves -- his buddy is right there with him, and that helps a lot, in Anthony Clemmons, and if I take Mike out, Anthony runs it. We don't lose a thing, and together defensively they're spectacular. They both can make shots. They both make plays. And everybody is settled down when they're out there. It changes everything for everybody, especially when we have some of those young guys out there. So I'm thrilled with him.

**Q. Dale Jones was a guy who could really shoot from the outside. He looks like he rebounds really well. Has he come along defensively?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's a lot better. I mean, he's really trying to complete the picture. I'm really proud of Dale. Like you said, we know he can score and rebound, and you need that. We need that in the worst way, and he's not afraid. He's not afraid to shoot it at any time, but the defensive component was where he had to work. He knew that. He's staying in his stance, he's working with the ball, he's got vision, but then he goes and gets it, and that's important.

**Q. How about a guy like Fleming, comes in with a real scorer's mentality and now he's got to adjust**

**to a new role?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he's still attacking. He's always in attack mode, and you've got to love that about him. He's not afraid to make a play for himself. He's also very good at making plays for other people. It's not easy when you're not getting the kind of minutes that I'm sure he would like, to be that kind of guy. You don't have as much opportunity to impact the game offensively, but when he comes in, things happen, and you've got to love that about him and his mindset.

**Q. With Dayton, what's Cook brought to their --**

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's a good player. He's a scorer. He's versatile. He plays like a veteran. I really like his game. He's long. He does a lot of things that really fit with the style that Arch is trying to employ, and that's why they're good.

**Q. When you think about just the big picture of building an NCAA Tournament résumé, I know that's the goal every year. How critical is an event like this to just kind of --**

FRAN McCAFFERY: You're getting maximum exposure. There's a lot of teams in this who are going to be in the NCAA Tournament, so you're playing against them. That's why we go, for that opportunity. You can sit home if you want to or you can go play people. I think ultimately you get rewarded for doing that. If you look at the history of how the NCAA selection committee looks at your team, you will be rewarded for not being afraid to play people. Now, you don't ever want to get in a situation where you're burying your own team by over-scheduling, and that's the balance that all of us face at the start of the season, or going into last year when we put the schedule together, you try to match the schedule up with what you think you have, but I've tended always to go stronger no matter what. I just don't think it ever hurts you. It only helps you.

**Q. Did you find last year after losing those two games in New York, similar type of competition --**

FRAN McCAFFERY: There's no question that that helped us because we had great spurts in both of those games. We outplayed Texas in the first half, did not in the second half. We outplayed Syracuse in the second half, not in the first half. Lost both games, had opportunities to win both games.

But the overall experience of going there and playing teams of that caliber really impacted us down the road, and you saw that in January and February in particular.