

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery

Q. You have a lot of experience coming back, four starters, others playing a lot, what's the chemistry been like since you've been brought together and going forward? Are there any concerns or do you think they're gelling together?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: There's always concerns when you have 10 guys that are sophomores or less, and you don't have a lot of experience there. You do feel good, we've got the experience, we have four starters back. I almost consider Clemmons a starter, because he started most of the time, so maybe we have five.

But after that there's very little experience. And that would be a concern to anybody, but I do like the group. I do like -- to go back to your question, I do like the chemistry. I think the guys having gotten here in June, with the exception of Isaiah, they are locked into trying to learn what they're doing, and how to act and how to prepare and how to work. I think they have great examples with that upper class group.

We've had I think very, very competitive workouts, because they all recognize there's opportunity there to play. And we're playing those other five guys, who else is going to play? It's kind of wide open. And you also have to prepare for the following year, in order to do that we've got to get these guys ready. I think over time we will crystalize as to which one of them steps up.

Q. Is this where you envisioned the program being when Mike Gesell and Adam Woodbury became seniors?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I do think that we felt like that was a major step, but I was also comforted at that time by the fact that we had some other good players. We had in the class with Marble and McCabe, White, being a senior, I think that's how you do it. I think that class in particular fulfilled a lot of needs for us at the time. And those guys, as you remember, in the beginning of the season we started all three of them. And two of them have pretty much been starters since they got here.

Yeah, I had hoped that we would be farther along than we were at the time, certainly, and feel like we're there.



But, again, there's a different situation now because we don't have nearly the experience that we had with those teams.

Q. How have you seen last year's tournament run pay off so far?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, I don't really look at it that way, quite honestly. That was one small component of the journey. We looked at it from the minute those guys get here, how do they develop individually, how do they develop collectively, and can we get to the point where we have a team that's capable of playing the NCAA tournament. It's great that we got there. It's great that we won a game. But you want to consistently get better and improve from there. And as we all know, that's very difficult.

Q. Six guys, five freshmen, does it kind of feel like that's going to be the foundation going forward as you add to it?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you know, obviously you think about it, you do the math, you have 13 and they're 6. Obviously Dale is a junior, so that's a little bit different. But if you look at that core group of six players, we're going to need a good number of those guys to step up and be ready to go, not only this year, but certainly moving forward, because when that group leaves this year, there's a lot of minutes to be had. We'll see which one of those guys learns the system quickest, and can go out there and produce under pressure as quick as possible.

Q. Have you changed anything with regard to the shot clock?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: Not yet. That's a possibility moving forward. Obviously when we came into this season, that was something that I think every coach thinks about. What we want to change. I'm not convinced that 35 to 30 is going to make scoring go up. There might be more teams doing things differently defensively that would preclude you from shooting it quicker, anyway.

The timeout thing, that could manifest itself one time in a year that really affects your season. It's loud and somebody doesn't recognize. I could stand there at the 10-second line against the press and I could see the shot clock and I could call a timeout after nine seconds. Not only that, that would mean you only have

one second to get the ball to the line. You have to throw everything into the front court.

So, I think what you'll see, is you'll see some mistakes early, kids forget to call timeout, they didn't realize, we threw it in the back-court, he's taking his time. That's incumbent upon us as coaches that we constantly remind them of the new rules and that you have enough experience and leadership on the floor for those guys to make sure that it's communicated with everybody. Everybody on the floor at that time has to know.

Q. How does your job feel different, this season versus the first couple years when you were trying to get some traction?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: I think you have a different expectation level of where your program is and what you're capable of doing.

I think you look at your schedule and it's evident there. I think we have confidence as an organization, but at the same time it has to be tempered a little bit with our inexperience. You want to make sure that those key guys stay healthy. That will be a major concern. But I don't think you ever say, we've arrived, now we're approaching everything differently.

I still think you have to remain humble and hungry, especially in this league. Whoever finished behind you last year does not expect to finish behind you this year. They're going to put time and money into improving their lot and trying to be one of the eight teams that's in, and not one of the 16 teams that's out. That's just the situation that we are in right now.

Q. Last year at this time you said this is clearly Aaron White's team. Who is it this year?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's a little more collective simply because not that Gabe and Josh weren't great leaders, they were. But you're talking about potentially four senior starters.

So all of those guys will have a different voice in the locker room, on the road. They all have very different personalities. Jared does not have the same personality as Aaron White. That said, he's one of the hardest working people I've ever been around. That in and of itself is a great example to the young guys that we brought in. He's more likely to talk less and have more impact, I think.

Woody and Mike probably have more to say, as will Clemens. I would categorize it that way.

Q. What do you make of Woodbury this year?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: Woody is going to play a

lot more than that. He's got to be able to play 30 to 36, somewhere in there. Unless he's in foul trouble. We've got to be careful how we use him and he's got to -- he's always been a physical guy. He will put his body on you, his hands-on you, he's always been that kind of player. He's got to get his hands here and move his feet, because he does move his feet really well for a big man and just utilize his experience to get where he needs to get to on the floor and stay out of foul trouble and then rebound and post defend. Again, post defend with his feet, not poking for steals. Move his feet, get in the front and trigger a break. And then also run the floor, if he's not the guy with the rebound.

Q. Talk about your expectations with Dale Jones coming into the program?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, Dale's got a great opportunity. He's a long arm scorer who rebounds. And I think those are the two things you have to love about him. Defensively he's got some improving to do, he knows that. But with that length I think he could be a really good defender, if he just positions himself where he needs to be. He's a guy that with minutes is going to put points and rebounds on the board.

Q. Seems like in the blink of an eye you went from recruiting Adam and Mike every single day in that summer to being here and now they're almost gone. Can you kind of comment on how they've progressed since day one, since they got in here. What are your expectations for them, not only on the court doing what they need to do, but in a leadership role now that they are seniors?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: When they came in we had high expectations for both of them, in particular. I think we looked at them both as guys who would probably start as freshmen, which they did.

They had been previously winning players. So we had every expectations that we would win with those guys in the starting lineup. We won 67 games in three years, with those guys in the starting lineup. So that was not a major surprise. It wasn't only because of them. They had a lot of help. A couple of draft picks in there and so forth.

But they understood and could fill the roles that we defined for them. They competed, they prepared, they worked in the summertime, they worked hard to get better.

So now what you're expecting is them to have the kind of senior year that we all hope that the great ones have, and that is to play the best that they possibly can.

You look at Mike and say he's going to be fabulous, he's going to defend the other point guards, defend the

offense to perfection, and he's going to score. Could he score more? He might. He's healthy, and had a problem with his elbow, but he's healthy now.

With Woodbury, you look at his numbers and say, well, they have been more? Yeah. But his playing half the time, they could have been higher. He's going to play a lot more now. So you'll see his numbers improve without question. He's a guy that could lead the Big Ten in rebounding. Will he? I think he could. Thirty-four, 35 minutes, he could be a 10-12 rebounding game guy. We have the ability to run our offensive through him, because he's a willing passer. I think what you'll see is a guy who plays a little differently than he played last year, knowing that he's going to be out there more often.

Q. What do you envision Jarrod's role being?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: I would expect him to be very aggressive. I want him to be aggressive, he's got a unique game at 6-9 he's got that kind of versatility. So I'm excited about that.

I want him to continue to be aggressive. As you remember in his first year here he wasn't aggressive enough. He was more aggressive last year. We went to him in clutch time. He won the Minnesota game for us. He shot at the buzzer at Northwestern. He's got that big shot-making ability.

Now that said, teams are going to be keying on him a lot differently than they have in the past. It's going to put more pressure on him, but I want him to be even that much more aggressive as a result.

Q. About the Big Ten. What's your view on it?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: I think the Big Ten is the best it's been since I got on the league, top to bottom. I look at every team and say, okay, every team has really good players and has a chance to be a lot better than they were last year. Wisconsin lost two pretty key guys, two guys in the top 15 or whatever it was. But you've still got a guy that I consider a first round pick, in Nigel Hayes and one of the best guards in the league in Koenig.

You go right on down the line, you look at who Northwestern has, who they brought in. Who Nebraska brought in. Who Penn State brought in. These are different programs. And that's really going to make it difficult, because the other folks, Michigan, Ohio State, Michigan State, et cetera, they don't plan on going anywhere. Indiana, you look at our league, Maryland picked first, in most publications, in the eyes of the top five. Michigan State is in the top five. Like we usually do, probably five teams inside the top 25.

That makes it a difficult journey, without question. But I

think what makes it better this year is the quality from top to bottom. It is the best it's ever been.

Q. The freshman class, I know it's early, but have any of those guys caught your eye?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: They all have caught my eye in a lot of different ways. How that will manifest itself specifically we have too much time to figure that out right now. Who can take what they've done so far and then go play three positions legitimately. Everybody thinks they can play three positions, but a lot of guys can't remember three positions, because that means tech plays, out of bound plays, zone offensive, defensive teams. Now you're the one, now you're the three, now you're the two. Certain guys can handle that and certain guys can't, that will manifest itself over time. Who can play well when the TV lights come on? Who does it then? That's a big difference for some guys.

So I'm hopeful that certainly three or four of them can really rise to the top.

Q. Peter Jok is an upperclassman now. What do you expect from him?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: I think you saw a dramatically improved defensive player, a lot of the reason he didn't play much as a freshman early was he wasn't guarding people. At the end of his freshman year he really showed signs, obviously the Tennessee game.

Then last year he got hurt and was banged up. He really wasn't much of a factor at the beginning of the season and just kept coming. Obviously by the end of the year he was one of our best players, and a guy that would make big shots late.

Last year he played like a veteran. You've got to figure it out yourself and then you've got to go do it. You can talk about why you're not playing, but then you've got to figure out what to do and how get in the lineup and stay there. That's what he did.

We would go on the road and he would hit big shots when we needed him. We could go to him, we could run stuff for him. We could stuff for him, and the other team knew we were going to run stuff for him. That's a weapon. He's a weapon. He's mature and I think he's in the best shape of his life. He's been fun to watch. I expect him to have a really terrific season.

Q. Three-point shooting has been a difficult thing. Last year Jarrod Uthoff was good from there, but do you see Mike Gesell or anyone else improving there?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: I hope so. I want Mike to

do what he does, if he makes a few more threes that would be great. I expect Jarrod to be a great 3-point shooter, and Pete. We've got a lot of guys that can contribute, whether it's Fleming, Isaiah Moss, Brady Ellingson, a ton of guys. Dale Jones is a phenomenal 3-point shooter. We've got plenty of options there for 3-point shooting. Clemmons had a high percentage last year, but there weren't many attempts. When he was open, he shot it and he shot it in. I'm not worried about that.

Q. As far as your starters go, it's still really early, is it Clemmons or Uhl, depending if you want to go small or big?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, probably. That could change. But it's exactly what you would expect it to be. You would expect Clemmons to be out playing people at this point in time. We really had two full practices, and we obviously started working out in June and had some work in July and some workouts in September. You would expect others to be farther along. But the question becomes is there a better fit in the starting lineup? And do we go back to a guy that, one of the best six men in college basketball in many ways last year? You could bring him in, he could score for you and he could play the point for you. He would make big plays at critical times in the game.

I always go back to the Carolina game when we were in a scoring drought. He makes a huge traditional 3-point play, and takes a charge to win the game. It's almost irrelevant whether he starts or doesn't, he's going to play the same number of minutes, I would say.