

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



Q. Ethan Happ looks to be effective on the floor for Wisconsin.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think he does a lot of things. He's really good in the low post. His length defensively has helped them, so he's a solid rebounder at both ends, and he's a really good defender. He's got really good instincts. He's been a good player.

Q. How have they changed with Greg Gard in charge now?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They haven't changed that much. They're still doing what they've always done, you know, and it's kind of a winning formula.

Q. Have you seen a lot of growth from Wisconsin over the course of the year?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, they've got some young guys, yeah. I think it's to be expected. Guys that haven't played as much -- you know what you're going to get out of Koenig and Hayes certainly. You know that. Happ has really stepped up. Vitto Brown was not in that role. Even though he's not young, he hasn't been in that role. I think he's been terrific.

Hill has been impressive. Showalter, another guy who's not young, but he has not been in that role, and he's been very effective, as well.

Those guys, the more they've gotten to play and the more they've gotten to be in situations where they have to take big shots and make big plays, they've done that.

Q. Talk about going back to work after a day off; was there anything specific you worked on or was it collectively getting better in certain areas?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think that's what it was. It was not one area where I felt like we were deficient. You want to go back and work on everything that you do and try to get better in every one of those areas. That's what we tried to do.

Q. Do you think the team was tired at all and that it needed a break?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't think so. Everybody is probably tired as you get to this point of the season. I don't think we're any more tired than anybody else.

Q. Happ committed to Wisconsin pretty early. Were you ever involved in recruiting him?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, we talked to him. He went quick.

Q. As a coach do you implement new plays as the season goes down? Do you input new things toward the end of the season?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, occasionally. I don't do a lot of that. Some coaches do more than others. But we have done that. We've done that this year. We've done it in the past. I think that's fairly typical, especially as you get later in the conference season when everybody is watching you over and over on film.

Q. Some of your guys were short on a few free throws the last few games. Is that a product of anything other than lack of concentration?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's not for lack of practice. It was good shooters for the most part. It was frustrating that, in particular, I thought the Penn State game was like 1 for 2, 1 for 2, 1 for 2. You've got to take advantage when you're in the double bonus as much as you can, and they've shot a ton over the weekend.

Q. Obviously a lot of new guys, but Hayes has been here before. You've seen him before. How do you counter him on Wednesday?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he's a really difficult cover because he's a terrific ball handler. He gets to the free-throw line, and he can make threes, so those kind of guys are tough to guard because he can post you, but he can also pop out off the post and go one-on-one off the dribble, very similar to Kaminsky in that regard. He's got a really quick first step for a guy that big.

Q. When you look at, I guess, not only Wisconsin but the overall quality of the opponents you have to close out the Big Ten, does that week off come at a perfect time?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I hope so. You know, we've had some time to work on some things, but I think you make a good point. I mean, the next four games are really all against very good teams. So hopefully we'll play well, play a little better than we have recently. We're close, but I think our defense has to get better, especially with the weapons that we're going to face on Wednesday night.

Q. You've always talked about and your team has always had a good approach as far as blinders, looking forward. But I'm sure it's also a little difficult not to eyeball, see what Indiana or Maryland is doing.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I think everybody does that. I don't know that that changes. I mean, you're locked into your next opponent as it relates to the game plan and preparation, but everybody will look at who else is doing what in the league and checking scores and stuff like that. I think that's fairly typical.

Q. You mentioned getting better on defense. What are a couple of things that you think you need to get better at here down the stretch?

FRAN McCAFFERY: When I say we need to get better at defense, it will never be one thing. It will be, okay, ball pressure, weak-side help, rebounding, limit them to one shot, more attention to detail as it relates to the other team's best players, better at defending ball screens, better at defending in transition, better communication so we can be more efficient five as one. It's all of that. It's not, okay, we're not doing one thing. Our defense hasn't been awful, but it hasn't been as good as it needs to be.

Q. You talked after Penn State about getting other guys going offensively outside of Peter and Jarrod. How do you do that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's really hard because I kind of give my guys the green light, so it's not like, okay, I'm going to turn so-and-so loose. Mike can shoot it when he wants, Sapp can shoot it when he wants, Woodbury, I think, really understands how he's effective scoring the ball. But then it's the guys off the bench, how are we going to get Uhl going a little bit more in particular, Ellingson. Those are guys that can make threes, and we need them to do that. I think Ahmad Wagner is a guy that can score the ball. So we've got enough weapons and just got to maybe get those guys a few more minutes.

Q. Do they get too reliant on those guys at times, on Jarrod and Peter especially?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, when you have two really good scorers like that -- you look at every team, a lot of them are just like that. They're going to take the bulk of the shots, they're going to take the bulk of the free throws. Down the stretch you're going to go to your best shooters, your best scorers. Everybody does the same thing. But hopefully we'll get a little bit more from each guy, and I think we have the capability for that, in particular with Mike and Sapp.

Q. You guys have allowed almost 14 offensive rebounds per game over the last five. How can you

go about countering that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Just got to do a better job. You've got to put a body on somebody, you've got to get your guards in there rebounding, and you can't do that against Wisconsin, no question.

Q. With Dom, is it more that teams are guarding him differently, or is it more --

FRAN McCAFFERY: A little bit. I think a little bit. No, I think they're pushing up on him a little bit more than they were. Same with Nicholas. Those guys are shooting really good numbers, so you're going to get more attention. They're going to be up in your space a little bit more. Fortunately for them, both of those guys can go off the dribble, and that's what they need to do. If they're up in them, they've got to go off the dribble and make a play for somebody else, so we're saying we want them to shoot more, but if they're chasing you off it, then you've got to go make a play, and that's what I would want them to do. That's what I told them to do.

Q. You recruited Monty Williams to Notre Dame; is that right?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I did.

Q. Did you go to the funeral last week?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, Billy and I went. Billy was his teammate, and I coached him when he was there the whole time.

Q. That message was apparent to everybody who watched, it was --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, you know what, I think it puts a lot of perspective onto our profession in many ways. I talked to him after the funeral service, and he said, you know, here's a guy whose got a very successful coaching career going. He had a great playing career, played about 10 years in the league. He said, I'm putting the whistle down, I've got to raise my five children. They ranged from five to 17, so he's going to step away from coaching, and I have a ton of respect for him.

It was great to see the outpouring of support and love that we showed his family, we being the entire basketball community. I mean, I looked, I saw Chris Paul and Tim Duncan sitting two pews over from me, and they played that night in LA. Pop was there. I mean, it was such an incredible show of support. You knew the Oklahoma City Thunder people would show up in unity, which they did, but I think it's a reflection of who Monty is, who Ingrid was. I knew her when she was a student at Notre Dame. I mean, I got off the plane, we went down to play Indiana, and as soon as we landed, one of our former players called and said, you're not going to believe what happened, and he told me. I felt like somebody punched me in the stomach,

because I know the kind of person she is. I know the kind of relationship they had, and I know his children.

It was great to see his dad. I saw his dad, and luckily he's got tremendous support, and we'll try to be there for him for the duration.