

# University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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## Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



**Q. I know the challenges are immense facing somebody like Melo Trimble and what he can do and how he can drive and create with his friends on the team. What do you expect out of him?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I expect more of the same. He's really good with the ball. He's just as dangerous when he's looking for shots for himself as he is when he's loading other people up and those are the toughest guys to guard, especially when they can stop behind a screen and make a three, and he can put points on the board in a hurry.

But he's brutal in ball screens; a lot of times he doesn't even need a screen because he's so quick, and he gives it up easy and he gives it up early. And those guys are ready. They've got their hands ready and they catch passes in traffic and finish plays in traffic.

But he's got a lot of weapons around him, which, any time you have a guy like him and you put four other great players around him, it makes him that much more difficult. Because if you're going to help, you're going to give something up.

**Q. What is he like, maybe a Trey Burke type?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: He's a little quicker than Trey Burke. But Trey Burke could really score the ball. He was tough putting points on the board.

**Q. Who will be the man who gets the assignment on Melo?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: We'll rotate on him. That's a tough cover for 40 minutes for anybody.

**Q. You just coached there once?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I've coached there twice.

**Q. What were your memories from coaching there?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: The first time was right around when they won it. Gary Williams was there, and the building was new, so the atmosphere was tremendous. I was coaching UNC Greensboro then, and we took our Siena team in there. It was a little bit different. I felt like when I went there with UNC Greensboro it was a payday for us. When we went there with Siena, I thought we could win. We played better, but it was just

a great experience. It's really a terrific college basketball venue. I was always a little partial to Cole Field House. I thought that was one of the great venues in college basketball in the last century. But this place has everything you need.

**Q. Does anything change when you go into a new venue that your players haven't seen?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: No. It happened the other day at Rutgers. We're used to those kinds of facilities on the road, big crowds, loud. Nothing different there.

**Q. Does a road win feel different?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Oh, absolutely. You feel like you've overcome a lot, accomplished a lot, because you really have to be together on the floor and you have to hold on to the game plan because there is so much noise and you've got to really -- it's hard to communicate sometimes, so you have to really communicate with each other and you have to pull each other over and you have to help and support one another on the floor. So I think the players feel a little bit differently when they get a W in a situation like that.

**Q. Do you look at the success you've had at a couple other tough joints this year and use that to build in a place like this?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I don't think you look at a win and say, okay, we've got to do this. There is a certain way to play, and there is a certain way to play on the road. You try to consistently do that, no matter what.

**Q. Starting the season unranked, in fact, well outside the top 25, now third in the country. What's it say about how far this team has come? Or was it just maybe people on the outside, swung-and-missed?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I don't think it makes any sense to rank anybody preseason. I get it. People want to talk about it. But it's really a waste of time. You don't know really who has healthy players, who has young guys that are ready, who has young guys that aren't ready? We don't pay any attention to that. Then your season starts and you see where it ends up.

You don't pay attention to it today because we've got 11 more very difficult games. A lot could change between now and the end of the season. So you really lock into what can we do in this next game to be better and what

can we do to beat a really good team on the road.

**Q. Your 3-point numbers are way up from past years. Is that because you're better equipped to do it or is has it been a philosophical change that we're going to shoot more threes?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: No, we just have better shooters.

**Q. Before the season started, a lot of the success, you said, hinged on the depth of this team. How well Nicholas and Dom could really step up. As a coach with 11 games to go and their success so far, how do you feel going into those 11 games with those guys?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I feel really good because they've been consistent. A lot of times you'll have a guy come off the bench and have a good game. But Baer and Uhl and Ellingson, they've had a lot of good games. I keep saying this, but I'd be comfortable going to Christian or Andrew if I had to. I've done it with Christian more so than Andrew lately.

But you can't survive a grueling Big Ten schedule with five or six guys. You just can't. So I'm thrilled with how those guys have performed. Because even on days where they haven't scored as much, they've been rock solid defensively, and they've taken care of the ball and they're not mistake guys.

**Q. You have such success like that with your bench, does that give you more confidence as a coach to try new things?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I don't know about trying new things. I would say trying different lineups. We saw it in the Michigan game where I had Uhl, Wagner, and Baer on the front line when we made our run in the second half. That speaks volumes about what I think of those guys. And they've produced in a very difficult situation, so I wouldn't be afraid to do it again.

**Q. When you look at Robert Carter and what he can do shooting, and he's almost similar, I would say to Utah and he's a transfer. How does he impact their offense beyond just the obvious as far as scoring?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I don't know that he impacts their offense any other than you're talking about a guy who is an NBA player. He'll play in the NBA. He's that good. You put him and Sulaimon out there with Stone and Jake Layman -- every one of those guys expects to play in the league and probably will.

You're right in the sense that he's a little unique in that he's got really good perimeter skill set for being as big as he is. So he can play down low if he wanted to. He can play on the perimeter. He can make a three. He can pick-and-pop or pick-and-roll. He's versatile that

way. It just gives him another weapon. Especially if you're rotating defensively for any reason.

**Q. Jarrod put on 15 pounds in the off-season. How have you seen that help his game?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: It's helped him maintain stamina and endure the length of the season. I don't think anything specifically on the floor. He could play at his other weight. It's just it's a long season unless you have a little more strength.

**Q. Jarrod's a pretty quiet guy. Doesn't show a ton of emotion on the court. What does his demeanor and him being comfortable in his own skin do for the glue of this team?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think it relaxes everybody else. Mike's the same way. So you've got the guy with the ball, and then you have your best player kind of pretty relaxed out there, but they both compete. They both fight. Woodbury's kind of the same way. He's a little more vocal. Clemmons is a little more vocal, Pete's not, but you see him battling. So I think it just sort of permeates the roster in a good way.

**Q. What does it take to win a road game in this league?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Well, it takes the intelligence not to turn the ball over, to understand what's a good shot, to understand when you're going to quick shoot the ball, get everybody involved. You're going to have to make adjustments, typically. You saw that at Purdue.

You have to make adjustments throughout the course of the game. It's one thing for a coach to make an adjustment, it's another thing for the players to execute that the way they did. And they were able to do it. I think in a lot of ways because they've been there before. We were down there a couple years ago in a dog fight and we lost in overtime. All right. So you learn from that. Those guys live through that. What do we do differently now? We were much better this time around.

**Q. Does anything surprise you about this season that maybe you thought was a weakness and has turned into a strength?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Well, I've said this before in September, I didn't know where our bench was. We weren't ready. It would have been a hard fight with five guys, six, maybe. Dom was fine, but the other guys were not ready. So I don't know if it's a surprise. We recruited them because we thought they were good. But you oftentimes can't determine how quickly a guy's going to get ready. A lot of freshmen have time. They didn't have any time.

Right off the bat we were playing the No. 1 Division II team in the country. And then played a good Gardner-Webb team, we're down in Orlando and playing Top 20 teams, Dayton, Notre Dame and Wichita State and come back and play Florida State, Marquette on the road. There was no time for those guys to kind of kick it off their foot and miss a shot and kind of play through their mistakes. They didn't have that luxury.

So to their credit, they've all been terrific. That's been the key, I think.

**Q. Along those lines, you didn't play them a whole lot early.**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I didn't play them hardly at all in Orlando, which was a mistake for me and for them. But I think it was good because I think they understood, all right, they've at least got a chance to look at it and say okay I understand why I'm not getting in, but when he puts me in, I'm going to be ready.

**Q. With what Baer did against Drake, that was right after the Iowa State game. It almost seems like your bench has taken off since then. Do you see it that way?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Baer was great in the Dayton game. He was fabulous in the Dayton game and played well against Wichita State. I thought Uhl was great against Marquette. So I don't know that I would equate it to one specific moment, no.

**Q. What do you make of recruiting rankings? People make such a big deal about them in your sport and in football. Do coaches dismiss them?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Don't dismiss them. It's clearly not an exact science. It's pretty easy to get the top 15 or 20 guys. Take you into a gym and watch a game and say, okay, that guy's one of the top players. But after that, there are a lot of variables. How well were they coached? What is their basketball IQ? You can't just get by at this level with tremendous athletic ability.

Okay, what happens when you get closely guarded? What happens when you can't bully your opponent, somebody else who is as big and strong as you are? Do you have enough game? Do you have enough intellect to compete? Are you tough enough? Will you put the time in in the summer. Because guys are going to be in the gym shooting a thousand a day; are you going to shoot a thousand a day? So, that's really what it comes down to.

I think the really critical thing for those guys, if they get a high rating, is to be just as hungry and not be content. I'm ranked nine, great.

I always tell the story, I recruited Pat Garrity and we got

killed. He's not good enough. He's not in the Top 150. He's the 19th pick in the draft. Somebody was 19 that year on somebody's list, and it wasn't him. He's the 19th pick in the draft. So \$35 million later he's retiring. So the key is to stay humble and hungry no matter what.

**Q. Is it hard to evaluate shooters, the high school shooter and getting it to project to the college level?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I don't think so. You could maybe walk into a gym and say, okay, that particular guy won't translate. The basket is the same size. The 3-point line is a little bit longer but you look at his release. Can he get it off quick? Does he have the flow release? Can he do anything off the dribble at all? Is he strictly catch and shoot?

But there are guys that are at our level that are catch and shoot guys that are still successful. You've just got to run different stuff for them.

**Q. Peter started his career off here kind of on the wrong foot.**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I wouldn't say that. I would just say he was an inexperienced freshmen playing behind experienced guys. I thought he was really good. He just wasn't as good as he is now.

**Q. In that he had some off the court issues.**

COACH MCCAFFERY: That was ridiculous.

**Q. How did you get him to the point where he is today?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: He did. I don't think I deserve any credit for that. I mean, I coached him up. I talked to him about it. I did talk to him after the Tennessee game when he was terrific, and I said you should be a 15-point scorer for us next year. But you've got to go to work. And he was not physically strong enough nor did he have the stamina to compete at the Big Ten level for 28 to 32 minutes a game and be a starter. He wasn't good enough.

You know, Marble was a senior that year. Clemmons and Gesell played. We played him. He had some big games, but he figured it out. He went to work. Last year I thought he was great. This year he's better. He'll be better next year. That's kind of how it works.

**Q. There is the bench, there is Pete's improvement and a lot of things we've talked about. But for you what do you feel is the one reason this team is succeeding and getting national recognition?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think they're together. They're a group that really enjoys each other and they respect each other. They share the ball and they help each

other. They don't ever get down on themselves or get down on each other. They encourage. They try to do everything we ask them to do. It was a really easy team to coach in that sense. There is no friction amongst the coaches and the players, the players and the players.

I've said this a million times, they don't get too down on themselves after a loss or get too full of themselves after a win. You can't do that. Because you could lose three or four in a row easily in this league.

**Q. Does that take time to learn that?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Oh, absolutely. Now some guys do get it when they're young, they do. But it's not an easy thing. I remember three years ago when we lost all those close games. It seems we lost three that year with buzzer beaters. We had a couple buzzer beaters that didn't go in and that's frustrating. They go in against you and you don't make them. But that group kept plugging away and here we are.

**Q. How much of the second half of game success comes from having all of those seniors, the guys that have been through so much?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Well, it matters a lot because they know how to execute down the stretch. They kind of know what to expect defensively or are we going to get press? Are we going to get two guys running the ball at half court? Are they going to be trapping ball screens? Are we in the bonus? Are we in the double bonus? So maybe we drive the ball rather than jack a three and get to the free-throw line now we can get into our press. They understand how everything fits together, and they should when they've played this much together.

**Q. Are you seeing more demands on your time as you guys rise in the polls?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: A little bit.

**Q. How do you manage that?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: He manages it (nods towards SID).

**Q. Have you talked to Coach Ferentz at all with the eight month stretch the Hawkeyes have had here on campus?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: No, I think he's busy recruiting and I'm busy coaching, but we do correspond. He's really an amazing person. I mean, he sent me a long letter after the Iowa State game that was pretty impressive. And it tells you everything you need to know about him. But he's been like that since I got here. He's embraced me and helped me and helped our program, met with recruits.

It's been a great ride from that standpoint when you look at how he's helped us. Tom Brands, same thing, Lisa Bluder, we're kind of all in this together, and we all try to help each other. So that's how it should be.

**Q. What was the message in the letter if you could share any?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: It was kind of long, which I think made it even more impressive. They're getting ready to play in the Rose Bowl and he wrote me a full page, handwritten letter. So it was a lot of interesting information in there that was very applicable to what we were going through. There is nothing he hasn't seen.

**Q. Were you surprised about the letter?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: No. He always sends me notes. If we've had a tough loss, if we've had a big win, and I do the same with him.

**Q. So the camaraderie here is that common in college sports you've been all over. Is it unusual here?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: It's a little bit more unique, yeah. There is a closeness that exists that I think makes us all feel good. You don't want to feel awkward about approaching someone for help. You want to know that you're going to be embraced, and we all, I think we're all friendly with Bond Shymansky, we try to help him. It's the same for us. It's not just the four coaches I've named. It's everybody.