

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



Q. Was the team a little more inconsistent than you thought it would be at Orlando, or is that just part of the growing pains of incorporating new guys, do you think?

COACH McCAFFERY: I thought it was a function of we played good teams. We were not good defensively in the first half against Dayton versus a running game. Our transition defense was not good. If your transition defense is not good against Dayton, you're going to be down 12, which is exactly what we were. I'm proud of our fight.

The Notre Dame game, we had a scoring drought in the first half. That was really our problem. Defensively, I thought we did really well. I thought Gesell did a terrific job on Jackson, one of the best point guards in the country. They made some shots late, and we didn't.

Q. Have you learned anything new from the beginning of the season until now about what your team is that you might not have thought it would be?

COACH McCAFFERY: Nicholas Baer could be a really good player, and that proved to be true. He played well on a big stage against really big people.

I thought we could kind of get out of Brady Ellingson what we got, and we did. Dale Jones gave us some quality minutes. I thought we could get that. I still think Dom Uhl has been solid. We'll get more out of Ahmad when the season goes on, and I think we'll get more out of Fleming and Christian Williams.

It's hard -- when you get into those kinds of games, it's hard to play 12 guys. It's almost impossible. You walk down, and you want to get some of those guys in there to get experience and bring them along to try to win the game, and we do have four seniors and five really experienced players, and that's who you're going to play. That's who I'm going to play. There's not that many minutes left this year for a lot of guys.

Q. How would you describe Baer's game? It seems kind of unique in some respects.

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, he is incredibly versatile,

and he can play inside, and he can play outside. He can dribble, pass, and shoot. He can post up. He can guard a bigger guy. He can guard a smaller guy.

But when it's all said and done, he's smart. He's always in the right place. He recovers well. He's a better athlete than you think because he's long. When you can make threes and you have those other parts of your game, you've got something special there.

Q. Adam Woodbury seemed to give you a little more offensively than maybe he has for a pretty long stretch there. Is that a part of the game we'll see, or is his value still going to be with the passing of the defense?

COACH McCAFFERY: He's still going to be doing all the things he's always done well, but he can score. When he stays within himself, he screens and rolls. He gets an angle to the rim. He makes layups. He makes little shots, baseline jumpers, elbow jumpers, free throws. He's going to score, and we're going to throw him the ball because he'll pass it too.

The only time he gets himself into trouble is when he tries to do too much with post moves. It's hard to score over people in the post. I don't care who you are. So as long as you're intelligent with when you go and when you don't, you're going to shoot a high number, which is what he did.

Q. And then with the exception of the Notre Dame game, you shot the three real well this season.

COACH McCAFFERY: That was disappointing because we were really open. We're up 10-3 in that game, and we had tons of open looks by good shooters, and they weren't going. So that was problematic for us, obviously.

Q. Do you see that as being a bigger component of the offenses as you move ahead, that the perimeter shot may be more than past seasons?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, but you look at our team, and that's no secret.

Q. In the course of recruiting Fleming, did you see quite a bit of Dwyane Bacon?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, we didn't. He committed to us before he ever enrolled at Oak Hill. But I've watched him a lot the last couple of days. He's

talented. You watch him, and you say, well, he's a driver. Well, he can really shoot, and he's a forward. Well, no, he's a guard. He's pretty special, I think. He's got the full complement of skills in his arsenal with a great frame to play the game.

Q. Then they got two others, Beasley, another 20-point scorer, and Mayes, who had some huge games last year, 30-point games.

COACH McCAFFERY: It's rare that you have two freshmen that average 20. Those two guys are special. But Mayes kind of makes them go. He had some 30-point games last year as a freshman, which you know doesn't happen too much at this level. So those three are a handful.

What's interesting, if you think about it, they had five starters back, and two freshmen are averaging 20. So I don't know that's ever happened. You can look it up. (laughter)

Q. What did you learn the most about your team, though? You thought the tournament would be a really good opportunity for you to learn more about your team than maybe you knew. Did you like what you learned? Did you not like what you learned?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, I thought we'd get into a fight like we did, you know, we would fight, and we certainly did that. The Dayton game wasn't looking good. Our transition defense was horrendous in the first half of that game. Now, partly because they're really good offensively in transition. That's as good a team as you'll see in terms of speed and quickness.

We were bad, and we got that figured out. But they're a really intense team. It was a great atmosphere, and we just kept coming.

You get a situation where there's two chopping calls. One goes against us. One goes for them. Sometimes it comes down to that when you get into a game like that. With all that happened, we didn't get either of them. So that's just part of it.

Notre Dame game, we were on fire early. I mean, making everything, and then we couldn't make anything. Same shot, same people. They're really a unique team in terms of how they play. I think that's another component of playing in a tournament like this. Dayton plays this way. Notre Dame plays that way. Wichita State plays that way. You got to get your guys ready with very short prep to adjust.

That's what conference play is, with different styles, different coaching styles. So I think that was really good. I think that, when it's all said and done, you don't want to get into a situation like that and get down 12 in

the first half and lose by 25. Okay, we did some things that we should have known better, we didn't do well. Let's make the adjustment and let's come back and see if we can win this thing, which we were right there.

You get to that Sunday, and you want to make sure you win at least one game. We're playing a team that's ranked. Now they don't have VanVleet. That's a big impact for that team. You take him out of there. He's one of the best point guards, maybe the best, in the country. But they still are really good. We played really well, and we did it consistently well in both halves, and that's what you want to see.

We had a poor first half against Notre Dame offensively, a poor first half defensively against Dayton, and they did well in both halves, both ends of the floor against Wichita State.

Q. Do you think Florida State will push the ball, if so, that will be another great test for your transition defense.

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, they're fast. They've got speed. They attack, kind of that attack mentality. It will be more up and down, similar to the Dayton game.

Q. What do you do in that situation? Do you release an extra guy? Do you pick the ball up earlier?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, the key oftentimes in situations like that is shot selection. You shoot crazy shots. A bad shot is often the same as a turnover. If you turn it over, that's a problem against Florida State. If you take a bad shot, it's a problem. It's any team that plays that way with those kinds of athletes. So you've got to take care of the ball and take good shots. Then get your guards back and get everybody else to sprint and keep fresh bodies out there.

Q. It seems like Dale Jones is adapting pretty quick to the Division I game. Is he a guy with his length could help you defensively as well as offensively?

COACH McCAFFERY: He's getting better defensively. He's still learning there. Offensively, he can shoot the ball. He can rebound. But defensively is where he's got to continue to work.

Q. How much for these guys is shot selection a learning process to make the transition to the next level?

COACH McCAFFERY: It's really a key to a lot of things because you take a young guy who shot whenever he wanted to in high school, and now, okay, what's a good shot? You're dealing with the shot clock. You didn't deal with the shot clock before. We've still got some young guys that are passing the ball with three seconds to go on the shot clock. You really have to be

locked into that and know exactly, once it gets under ten, what are we doing offensively? What are we doing defensively? And if you're coming off the bench, what's a good shot for you? Might be different.

Pete's going to be a volume shooter. Jarrod's going to be a volume shooter. We want those guys to shoot a lot, but if you're not shooting as much, if you just come in the game, is that a good shot for you? Maybe if you get up and down a few times, it's a better shot.

Who are we playing against? If they've got a lot of speed and you're jacking and we're not set and they're running down and dunking it, well, not only was it a bad shot, they're dunking the ball at the other end of the floor. So it's a really bad shot. So understanding the pace of the game, the components of the game that determine whether you win or lose is more of an adjustment, I think, than people think, the players in particular, most importantly.

Q. How is Clemmons health-wise?

COACH McCAFFERY: He's still hurting a little bit. He won't practice today.

Q. You mentioned player usage earlier. How do you, as a coaching staff, guard against over thinking that type of thing and avoiding that?

COACH McCAFFERY: It's sort of ongoing. It never stops, like, okay, we made a decision. You never really make a decision. You want to continue to give guys an opportunity.

I chose this weekend in particular to shorten my bench in the second half, which affects a lot of guys. So on one hand you want to play them. On the other hand, you're like, you know what, I'm going with this group. It gives me the best chance to win this game today. Another game would be a different situation maybe.

So I don't know that you ever really come to any conclusion other than you want them to keep grinding in practice, keep coming after it, try to be as fair and open as you possibly can be in terms of giving them a shot, but like I said, we've got some guys that are pretty solid in those starting positions. That's probably not going to change.

Q. Does that make it harder to really get a good feel for what you have?

COACH McCAFFERY: Sometimes you can change your starting lineup, go big or small, that kind of thing. But you get into the second half with media time-outs and you're in a tight game, you can play seven if you really want to play seven, six, as long as you take your time-outs strategically, because they're going to take some, some media time-outs, free throws. You're only

talking about 20 minutes with however many stops. They're 20 years old. They should be able to handle that, I think.

Over the course of 40 minutes, over the course of an entire season, you've got to get your guys some rest, and you've got to make sure you pace it so that you're not killing those guys with so many minutes that they're dead by the time you get to February 1.

Q. Has Uthoff been more aggressive offensively?

COACH McCAFFERY: I'd like him to be more aggressive. He had 15 shots yesterday. I'd like him to take 22 shots or 35.

Q. How do you convince a guy that's what he wants?

COACH McCAFFERY: Just keep telling him. I saw the stat, I said, 'why did you only take 15 shots?' 'Yeah, yeah, I should have taken more shots.' 'Yeah, you should have.' I said, I'm telling you to take 20. Okay.

Q. Does that surprise you sometimes? Most kids would say, if you're going to let me take 20 shots, I'm going to take 25.

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, he's unique. You've got to love that about the kid, though. He's a winning player. He had a wide open three yesterday. He saw Woody, and it ended up being a turnover, but at the time, it looked like a great pass. He curled it inside, and the kid got his fingers on it at the last second. I said, just shoot the three. Woody will get it and throw it back to you. Shoot another one.

Q. Coaches have made some comments about frustration with the new way officiating has gone. How do you feel like your guys have adjusted so far?

COACH McCAFFERY: Pretty good. We had a couple situations where our guys picked up two quick ones. That changes things. I wasn't real happy. But you've got to remember, okay, they send you a videotape and said, this is what the new rules are and this is how it's going to be officiated. You can't complain when they officiate it that way. They told you. You've got to get your guys to get their hands out, and you're happy you have depth, which we have.

I do think it hurts a little bit with Mike being out and Woody being out all that time. Then your struggle is, do you go back to them with two? Because that's what really I think he was referring to. It's hard to make that decision. I would normally put this guy back in and play a little bit more so he doesn't sit for 16 minutes plus the entire halftime and then try to -- if I put him back in, one little push, and he might end up on the bench with three.

Q. Are you reassessing kind of your thoughts on resting guys with two fouls in the first half?

COACH McCAFFERY: We always do. We reassessed it the whole time, but I left them both out.

Q. Would you like to see them raise it to six fouls, like they do in the NBA?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know, probably. If you asked me to vote on it, I'd probably vote that way. But does that make it more of a bloodbath? I don't know. It might. But you're still going to be in the one and one quick. I don't know.

Q. Shot clock being down to 30, is that even a factor so far?

COACH McCAFFERY: It really does not seem to have been a factor at all.

Q. You like the shots Peter's taken? Is he usually taking good shots?

COACH McCAFFERY: There was a couple of times where I thought he should have ripped and driven because you don't want to be -- he's shooting the ball so well. He didn't shoot it great this weekend, obviously, but he had been shooting the ball so well that you don't want to just settle every time, especially because they're going to start coming out on you. They're closing out on the three, taking away the three, taking away the rhythm three. You've got to rip and go.

Yesterday he made a really nice move and then charged. He kicked it to Clemmons for a wide open three. So you've got to be able to rip and drive and draw, jump stop, kick that, rip, one dribble pull-up. He's got such a really good pull-up game.

That way, if you're mixing up your pull-ups, your drives, your driving kicks, and your threes, it makes you really hard to guard.

Q. Doesn't Uthoff taking more shots help Peter a little bit, maybe give him more space when he does get the ball?

COACH McCAFFERY: I would think because Jarrod is always going to shoot a good percentage. To his credit, that's one of the reasons he takes less shots, why he shoots a good percentage. It's always a really good shot when he takes it. He very rarely -- you can't think of many times he's taken a bad shot, where I said that's a bad shot.