

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



Q. How is Anthony doing? Is he going to play?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think he will. Hasn't been determined yet. He's feeling a little better today than he did yesterday. It will be a game time decision.

Q. I'm sure you want to focus on tomorrow's game, but what can the last two games do for guys' confidence when you beat the number one team?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think what you're seeing is a team that understands how you have to compete, how you have to prepare, how you have to stay together and continue to believe in each other. But, you know, it just makes the next game that much more important.

In this league, everybody's good. Everybody has really good players. Everybody has a really good coach. So you can never relax based on anything you've done.

We always say, You can't let one game define you. You feel awful after we lose to Iowa State after having the lead, but that can't define you. Then you have a big win, two big wins. That can't define you. It's on to the next one.

It's such a long grind, the maturity that you need to continue to prepare the right way is really what's critical.

Q. Speaking about maturity that you have among your players. They said after the Iowa State game they were going to take it and learn from it. You seemed to win the games that you had to on the road at a place where you haven't won in 10 years, down 19, came back to win. Do you think they applied some lessons?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think what happened from that point forward, they understood that it's not like we can get to that game and then we'll take care of business in that game. It's what you do from the minute you lose right up through the game. How do you prepare in practice? How do you handle the holidays? What do you do when you go home? Do you get in the gym? Are you staying in shape? Are you getting lifts in over the break without classes?

That's the kind of maturity that we're talking about. Are

you studying the film provided and making sure you know what the game plan is and you can carry out the game plan, and if we have to make adjustments, then make those necessary adjustments effectively.

I think that's the maturity that you're talking about. It's not, We're going to show up and play well tonight because we know what we have to do and make up for something that happened before. That's not what it is. It's an everyday existence that has to take place within yourself and within that locker room. Every coach is always looking to try to make sure that happens, and obviously that it's sustained.

Anybody can do it for a short period of time. Can you sustain it, that's the challenge.

Q. What has it been like as a coach to see Baer and Uhl step up?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, the great thing about Saturday's game, it was 26-0 on bench points at halftime. Those two guys really stepped up in an incredibly big way at a point in time when we really needed it.

Baer's three out of the corner, turnaround jumper, but Uhl's two threes were huge in that game based on the timing of when he made them. He shot them without hesitation. That's what you want.

Maybe another time it will be Wagner, Ellingson, Williams or Fleming. But we just can't continue to rely on a small number of guys. We had 20 points in the first half, Uthoff had 16. You need others to step up. You knew Gesell and Jok, Woodbury, Clemmons, would play better in the second half, which they did. Others had to step forward or we wouldn't have won that game.

Q. If Clemmons can't go tomorrow night, what does that do for the rotation?

COACH McCAFFERY: It changes things. Obviously we're one man less. It will increase the importance of Fleming and Williams, also the other three, Uhl, Wagner and Ellingson.

Q. Seems like you've used Brady at point.

COACH McCAFFERY: I would play Williams probably at point.

Q. With such a veteran roster, do you worry less about taking an opponent lightly?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think we're beyond that. You can't take anybody lightly. By virtue of how we challenged our team in the non-conference with pretty much every team coming in here with a winning record except for, I don't know, maybe one, you don't have the right mindset, you're going to get nipped early.

We really I thought played well in those games. We lost to really good teams. We were in a position to win. We didn't win. But I thought in those games we played well in various parts.

Our guys know Shavon Shields. He's a terrific player. He came in here last year and got 25. We know what he's capable of doing. White is averaging 17 points a game. Jacobson is stepping up, Watson has been terrific. Webster and Benny Parker are playing better than they did last year. They're playing like veterans, like you would expect. McVeigh had 16 against Indiana in the last game. They've got a lot more weapons to go with two big-time scorers, both of whom are 6'7".

Our guys know what this league is. Every time you take the floor, somebody's got guys who expect to play in the pros. They got two of them, maybe more.

Q. They've always been competitive here especially. Last game, throw it out.

COACH McCAFFERY: We got on them early and they didn't shoot it well.

Like I said, I think they have more weapons from the perimeter than they had last year, especially when Petteway was struggling the way he was from the field.

Q. Obviously the focus is on tomorrow, Nebraska. Then you have nine days before you have your next game. Is that in the back of your mind at all?

COACH McCAFFERY: At some point you're going to get a bye. It's early, it's mid, it's late. You just deal with it at the time. Sometimes you need rest. Sometimes you'd rather just keep playing.

I just look at it like this: you just deal with it.

Q. Any consideration in playing a non-conference game during that time?

COACH McCAFFERY: No. Usually your non-conference schedule is completed before you get this portion of your schedule. But if I knew that, I probably would have spaced out the earlier games a little differently and put one there.

I still think you have that decision. Once you start

conference play, do you want to just keep it that way? It never really mattered to me in any of my other jobs.

I think in this case you want to kind of stick with Big Ten play anyway.

Q. With Clemmons' uncertainty, you have the nine days, is there more of a tendency to get him out there knowing he has nine days or more of a tendency to let him rest?

COACH McCAFFERY: It doesn't matter. That doesn't matter. What matters is what the doctors tell you. Can he play? If he can play, he'll play. If he can't, he won't.

Q. What does Shields do on the floor? At times he's tough to guard when he's driving. His left hand is pretty good.

COACH McCAFFERY: He's got a lot of game. He can shoot it outside, he can drive. He can finish with his left. He's got counter moves in the post. He shoots runners. Finishes long, finger-roll layups. Gets to the free throw line. He's kind of got that scorer's mentality. You have to be locked in when you're guarding him.

Q. Some teams handling adversity and success, that's where a team seems to struggle. You've had both at different times. You have such a veteran team, now you're in the national rankings, two years ago it didn't work out as well, this time around you don't see that.

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, our guys take an incredibly professional approach to practice and games, to travel, to breaks. That's what you always hope your teams do.

Doesn't always equate to victory. But I think it gives you a better chance.

Q. During Big Ten play, did you see teams try to adjust to Baer, and he was able to figure out the adjustment?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think teams have enough film on Baer now to scheme what they would like to do defensively against him. But the thing about him is he just has great feel, so he's not going to force the issue. I mean, he did have the one turnover on Saturday. But he was trying to be aggressive at a time when we were struggling.

He shoots open shots. If there's space, he drives it. If he's covered, he moves it on. He flies to the glass. He guards his man. He knows where to go.

Ultimately it's a simple game, if you play it like he does. If you overcomplicate it, drive into packs of people, try to do too much, then you start making mistakes and it hurts your team. He's never done anything to hurt the

team.

Q. On a conference call today, Matt Painter said something about you winning six games at the end of last year helped you to start this year. Do you buy that?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think there's a certain element of truth to that, yeah. I mean, we were sitting there 6-6 not knowing what our fate would be. We won six in a row and ended up with a pretty decent seed in the NCAA tournament, won a game. Some of those games obviously were close. Some of them weren't as close.

But I think the focus and concentration we needed from that point forward is what we kind of have been talking about all day. You hope it carries over. You hope it's consistent with your program every year, if possible.

Q. Is everybody academically good for the next semester?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, uh-huh.

Thank you.