

# University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

## Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



**Q. Brandon Taylor has had a nice career for Penn State, but this year he seems to have taken it to a different level. Is that a byproduct of not having Newble there, and how has he grown as a player?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: His game is completely different. He used to just stand out at the 3-point line and shoot, and he can still make threes, but he's scoring inside, he's rebounding the ball better. He's making plays for other people. He's been really impressive.

**Q. You guys are on the cover of Sports Illustrated. What did you think?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's great. I'm really happy for Jarrod in particular but for all the guys to be recognized at that level.

**Q. What does it say about the program? The most prestigious magazine in the country.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's a reflection of what they've accomplished. I think you always want that to be the case for your guys. When you see them working as hard as our guys work, you want to see them recognized properly, so I think it's a terrific honor. Great respect for that publication, and we're happy to be on it.

**Q. Something like that, a magazine cover, to the rankings, is that something maybe you appreciate more after the season is over?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Probably. I think that's probably a good way to look at it. You don't really want to stop and think, you just want to kind of keep going and try to keep getting better. It can be a distraction at times, but I think our guys are kind of used to the intensity of what it's like to play in the Big Ten. It's different. You get a lot of attention no matter what. It's great when it's for a positive reason like this, but all you really want to think about is, okay, how are we going to beat Penn State. That's all we want to think about right now.

**Q. How have they handled all the extra distractions this season?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: So far I think extremely well. I think it's probably because they've been asked and answered everything possible because most of the guys that you're talking to have been upperclassmen. I've been really impressed with the young guys, too. I

think they've handled it well. They've been real mature.

Certain guys have gotten a little more publicity, Nicholas and Ahmad, Dom, Brady, all those guys have produced, so they have to be in a position to answer questions and talk about it, and I think they've had good perspective. I think they've been humble, and I think that's what you want.

**Q. The Sports Illustrated and the rankings, does that help in recruiting, or is that overblown?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it will help, but it's not like it's going to be an immediate change in anything. It's going to help over time because there's a different level of credibility. It might help you, maybe, if you're in somebody's final three, maybe it helps you get over the top. Maybe it helps you get on more guys' lists. We'll see. I think that will manifest itself over time.

**Q. Talk about the way Penn State has defended you in the past, compared to Maryland, who was pretty physical with you and stumped you at times, do you think they learned something from that game that they can apply to this one, especially on offense, to get away from physical play?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't think they're the only two teams that play physical. They still change defenses; they'll still play some three-quarter court. They'll still mix in some zone. But when you look at the numbers, they're going to foul a lot, and they're going to crash. There's going to be a lot of activity around the glass, and you've got to be ready to play that way when you play them. That's been established for the last four or five years. That's how they play, so you've got to get ready for it.

**Q. Do you think this is your best defensive team here?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think if you look at the numbers, it probably is, yeah. I think we had the ability a couple years ago to really defend when we wanted to, but we also tended to rely more on our scoring and our ability to outscore you, and that's how we got into real trouble at the end of the season, because we played fairly well in those games that we were losing, but we were getting outscored. And those games were fairly high-scoring.

Our guys understand how to rebound. That was one of

my concerns coming into the season. We were not a big team that started. Our starting team is not big. We do bring some size in off the bench and we can go with three front court guys if we want to, but we've rebounded the ball pretty well, too. That helps your defense tremendously.

**Q. What do you think about your younger Bobblehead?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Probably about the same as I felt with the other ones. There's been a different theme each time. I don't think my hair was quite that long to be honest with you. It was pretty long, though. Back in those days that's what we wore.

But good memories of playing at the University of Pennsylvania. I really enjoyed my experience there, so I think it's pretty cool.

**Q. How do you keep your players focused on each and every game and don't look ahead to --**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think it helps, again, if you look at the fact that -- especially with the senior group, they've been through this. If at any time in the past they've gotten sidetracked a little bit for any reason, they know it, and our guys I think figure it out. There's only one way to approach this thing, and you've got to be locked in. It's collective. You've got to take care of your body and eat right, sleep, utilize your days off. If you've got any nagging injury, get with the trainer, get in a cold tub. All of those things, it's a professional approach, and you lock into the scouting report, how is the scouting report different from Northwestern, from Illinois, which is the next game, because every team has different challenges, and you've got to study those and be ready for those.

There's just one professional way to play successfully at this level, and so far we've done a really good job of that. I would say our guys over the years have done a good job of that, because other than that, there's no other trick to it. There's not. And it comes down to maturity.

**Q. Is there one of those upperclassmen that kind of keeps everybody grounded or does a good job of that?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: our upperclassmen, collectively, do a good job with our younger guys. I don't think they do it with each other. I think they respect each other's ability to take care of their own business. I'm talking about the upperclassmen. But it's really important for the young guys to understand what's necessary.

You can't come in the game and not know how to run a certain play. We're beyond that. If you can't come in and execute a play, then you can't play now at this

level, at this part of the season. So nothing personal; you've got to get that figured out. You've got to be able to come in and know exactly what we're doing on defense, exactly what we're doing on offense, exactly how we're guarding everybody on the other team, what's required to win this game, and then ultimately play through a mistake if you make one. And young guys, sometimes they struggle with that, and others don't. You don't always -- you can't always predict that when you recruit somebody, either. Sometimes it just takes them a little longer.

**Q. Is that what happened at the end of the game the other night with the reserves --**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. But in their defense, they're in a tough spot. We have the game won; you want them to play with a certain element of reckless abandon and aggressiveness, yet you don't want to play nuts with a 20-point lead. There was a couple times we did not execute and a couple times we didn't get a shot, and then the one turnover -- you can't turn it over like that in that situation, but the only time you figure that out is to kind of go through it. I normally don't have all of those guys in at the same time. They're usually in there with a few more veterans, which would have helped, but while it wasn't pretty, it's another step in the journey of trying to figure out what you need to be doing and what you can't do.

**Q. Is that a careful line at times, when you're up by the margin that you were? You want your guys to play hard and do good things, but you don't want them to necessarily with a minute and a half left dunk on somebody?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you've got to be careful with that, too, because if you do that, you could end up in a fist fight. You try to show it -- I don't want to show anybody up. It really wasn't to that point, but we've all been there. I remember a game a few years ago where we got dunked on and nobody was too happy about it because we were down by enough. So I don't want my guys to do that.

You look at a guy like Christian Williams, he's a freshman, he's running the point, he wants to be somewhat conservative, he just wants to run the clock out, move the ball, move the ball, move the ball, okay, then we've got to get a shot. There was enough time left we can't not get a shot, and that happened twice. So that's unacceptable.

But his thought process was not out of line. You don't want to start coming down and jacking saying, okay, I'm going to get 10 here in the last three minutes.

They learned from it. They had a great approach yesterday in practice, I thought very professional, and I

didn't make a huge deal about it. I jumped them in that one time-out, and after the game we talked about it very professionally. I challenged their toughness at that one point when I called the time-out. I didn't want to have to call a time-out then, but I did because I felt like we had to talk it over, and I felt like they were better after that.

**Q. Ahmad had maybe his best game the other day. What sets him above the other true freshmen that he's playing so much more?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's a different player. He's a terrific athlete. He has a very clear understanding of how he can come in and affect the game. He does not try to go beyond that, and he's really smart. So he really understands what's necessary and how he can impact the game. He's not sitting on the bench not thinking. He's thinking about, okay, when I come in, what can I do.

**Q. How challenging is that with a young player like that who had success obviously in high school, and his charge seems to be fairly narrow, get rebounds and provide --**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think that's what he did in high school, too. He's doing the same things he did there. He'd score a lot more if I played him more minutes, and little by little, I will.

**Q. Even with all the success in the conference, have you and your staff identified any areas you want to improve as you guys finish out the season?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, you want to be more consistent. We need more consecutive stops defensively. We want to rebound better. Our turnovers have been good, but we had more turns than assists against Maryland. You don't want to have that.

Just make sure we keep sharing the ball. I think that's been the staple of our team.

**Q. How is Penn State's offense different without Newbill?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Garner has been really good, which you expected. He was terrific last year. I think he's taken that next step, so he's a guy that'll take it on his own and is shooting the ball well from three, he's got great range. As we said, Taylor is a different guy, scoring in a variety of ways. He was really a limited scorer. You look at his free-throw numbers; he shot 30 free throws a year ago. He's already shot 74, so he's putting it on the deck, he's spinning, he's backing guys down, he's playing more like a combo 4 man than just a stretch 4. Banks has been really good. I've been really impressed with him. And then they've gotten really good play out of -- they've got three guys in the

middle, Dickerson, Moore, and Jack, those guys rotate. They've got length. They've got size. Foster is playing really well.

They've got some guys, and you've seen it reflected when they've played well, they've had some good wins, and they've gone on the road and beaten people. It's a team we've got to be ready for.