

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball

Iowa, 90 - Michigan, 83

Q. Made that run, they took the lead, and you guys answered. Just talk about what the difference was down the stretch.

FRAN McCAFFERY: It was interesting, because we seemed to be a little tired. Timeout came at a good time. They went up four, but we got the stops we needed. We were changing defenses throughout the whole game and we kind of went back and played some man-to-man and it was good.

The zone was good at times, but the man-to-man coming down the stretch was effective, and then obviously we were moving the ball, moving the ball, moving the ball. Got some good shots. CJ made some big shots. I thought Kriener's three might have been the biggest shot of the game.

CJ made one coming right out of that, and that's what you need in that situation.

Q. What did you like about the big lineup today?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, Kriener was spectacular, so it starts with that. In the first half he was the difference in that big run, but it gives you more options of some things we can run on offense.

It's good if we're playing zone to have two big guys out there to contest and rebound in traffic. The thing about it is both those guys can make threes, can pass and catch.

There's times when you want to be smaller, but going big is not a bad way to go for us, especially with those guys.

Q. What did you do well to keep them off the free throw line?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We played a lot of zone for sort of the middle portion of the game, the second half of the first half and most of the first half of the second half. That'll typically keep you out of foul trouble.

Q. And second straight Friday where you guys have this bad weather. Fans showed up. It seemed



to make a real difference.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Huge difference. It's going to make a huge difference no matter what, but I thought in particular, like I said, when they come to the bench if they're tired or not. They were tired. We played some guys a lot of minutes, heavy minutes.

So they just go take the lead and we got a tired group and we got to toughen up; that's when you need the fans. That energy level that they provided, especially when we made that first basket, was all the difference in the world. I was shocked last week, to be honest with you, we had the crowd we had, and same thing this week. Bad snow storm and these people showed up in force and they were into the game and impacted the game.

Q. Taking nothing from your players, but if only 5,000 people showed up and you couldn't have faulted them, would you have won?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I like to think we still would've won. We have enough mental toughness. The reality is you want to play home games if you can. You want to have that atmosphere. This team has I think really excited our fan base. They responded to them. Hopefully that will continue on Wednesday.

Q. Speaking of toughness, you look at what Connor was able to do, and he had almost half of your offensive rebounds, 13 total, five assists. 0-2, but he did everything you pretty much needed tonight. What does he bring to this team that allows everybody to be successful?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He helps us in so many different ways. He played point guard coming down the stretch. Started at the 4 spot; played some 2. Was all over the glass obviously and fed the post and moved the ball to CJ, to Wiesy. When they're open, he'll find you.

It just steadies everybody down when he's out there. You look at some stat lines. Okay, 38-25 on the glass. Well, he was maybe the biggest part of that. 22 assists on 27 field goals. He was a huge part of that. He wasn't the only one. Connor had five; CJ and Joe had three. We're going to throw the ball to Luka, so we got to get it to him and it's got to come from different locations.

Typically when they make 10 or 11 threes they win. So somehow you have to combat 11 made threes.

Obviously we made nine, which is good, but it's the rebounding and the assists and the ball movement and the critical stops when we needed it.

Q. I know you say that you expect CJ Fredrick to play the way he's played, but two games back from a stress reaction and 38 minutes and a performance like that, that's otherworldly, isn't it?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, but the thing about it, Mike, is it's kind of what he's always done. So when I say I'm not surprised, I'm not just saying that because I love the kid, which I do. He has been a gamer like that his whole life.

Huge shots, big games, road atmosphere, sold out buildings. I told you before, Rupp Arena, 15,000 people, 33, state championship game. This is what he does.

Q. Look at the atmosphere tonight and the intensity of the crowd and the situation, and it's like January basketball the way people used to view it before everybody became a bracketologist?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think that's a great point. Sometimes we tend to forget and not appreciate the regular season the way we should.

Really bugs me when I'm watching TV and it's December 9th and it's who is in and who is out? Who knows? I mean, guys are going to become eligible in the second semester, teams will have injuries, get hot. You're right. I get the whole bracketology thing, but I used to make jokes when I was on the I-club circuit. We're a 7 seed in Tampa if anybody wants to make their reservations now. You know, look at what Joe Lunardi says. And that's kind of where we've come.

For years that's what made the Big Ten what it was. Everywhere you go is an atmosphere like this. It's a grind it out tough, physical game. Guys have to respond, win close games, got to win on the road.

And the fans enjoy it and appreciate it. At the end of the year we'll figure out who goes to the tournament. But I guess it's just changed.

Q. Just seems like, I mean, 100 years these two teams have played each other. Great game in Ann Arbor, great one here. Atmosphere just seems to be essence of what you want.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Exactly. And hopefully the fans who showed up in force and really responded to this team, I hope they appreciate it like you said.

Q. You talked about Ryan the last few weeks. You feel like he's kind of underappreciated or overlooked from other teams when he comes in

and gets 11 in that five, six minutes?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't think so, because I know how much tape they watch. If you're watching tape -- I guarantee that staff watched every game we've played probably twice. If you're watching tape, you appreciate Ryan Kriener.

Q. Five minutes into the game you call a timeout and you obviously weren't happy. We haven't really seen a lot of that this season. Is it just makeup of this team?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They're not a big mistake bunch. They think the game -- you know, I wasn't pleased at the end the half. We had a foul to give. They score at the buzzer. I might have pointed that out in halftime.

But for the most part, you're right. I'm not blowing up. I'm not blowing up for good reason. I think you have to be careful, too. If you are going to go there, what happened and what do I hope to get out of it?

You start ripping them with a minute 20 to go, that's not going to do anybody any good. So if you do it earlier -- because there is three or four things we had talked about over and over that we didn't do -- that they get.

So if you're going to get on them, has to make sense to them. They're good kids and they're smart. They understand that. If you just yelled for the sake of yelling, then they just turn you off and coach is crazy.

Q. Michigan went on a 14 to 2 run and CJ came and hit that three. How important was that just to kind of get your guy back into it?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it was huge. It gave us the confidence to come back because we were pretty much relying on Luka up to that point. It also re-energized the crowd. They respond to do that shot and they were on fire the rest of the night. So it was big.