

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



Q. To me it seemed like that was your best defensive performance of the year. What was your observation?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, I would say that. I would agree with that. I thought in terms of putting everything together, you know, we had been really good at times. We had not really put it together for 40 minutes; and you have to against this team, a lot of veterans.

And right from the opening tip, we were locked into the game plan and stayed with it in terms of try to keep it out of the paint, trying to get back, limit their easy baskets, try to limit their second-shot opportunities. And then, you know, the other end moved the ball. They got up into us pretty good.

So it's not as easy as it looks, but you've got to get it moving but you have some opportunities to drive the ball. So really proud of our guys.

Q. Talk about Jordan with the point guard matchup.

COACH McCAFFERY: Jordan is a really good player. He's as tough a guy as I've seen. He's not going to be afraid. He's not going to back down. He knows what he can do, what he can't do. He's just going to keep getting better.

Q. Jordan and Isaiah and Cordell were as impactful as anybody. What does it mean to you to see those guys rise to the occasion in a game like this?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think as a coach you're always proud of them when they do that. I think what I would say to you is I have an expectation that they would do that. But unless they have an expectation for themselves, it's not going to happen.

So that's what gives you a great feeling as a coach, because Cordell kind of came in, 'I know I'm going to play well;' Isaiah, 'I'm going to play well;' Jordan, 'I'm going to play well.'

And what they were able to do -- each one of them made mistakes. And it's the ability to get to the next play and really compete that makes the difference with those three guys, because a lot of freshmen, when they make mistakes, it just keeps going south, and

those guys, it doesn't happen.

Q. There were a couple of jumpshots in the second half, and they cut the lead to seven and you came back and got some big rebounds.

COACH McCAFFERY: Big three by Jordan.

Q. He made the one that was like 25 feet or so.

COACH McCAFFERY: I thought he was going to make the next one from 35 (laughter). But that's what you love about him. He missed one and he just jumps up and makes probably the biggest shot of the game. No big deal.

And like you said, we went back and we got stops, and when they did score, I thought we were moving our feet. We were contesting. They made tough shots. When they scored down the stretch, they made tough shots.

Q. This is going to be viewed as a breakout win for a young team. Is this something you saw building or coming before this?

COACH McCAFFERY: I felt like, we had the potential to be better than we were playing. And you know, I sort of kept saying it: We played pretty well against Memphis at times, at Notre Dame for longer, Seton Hall, at times, and even Omaha at times. Started to put it together a little bit against Stetson. But this is a team that is ranked. So it is a step. But you can never be too satisfied, just like you can't get too down if you lose a game, whether it be this game or another game.

That was a tough loss for us the other night against Omaha, tough loss. But how do you respond, you know, and they went right back to work. They locked into Stetson, they put it together, came right back. No nonsense, very mature approach to game preparation, following the game plan.

And I thought the enthusiasm of the guys on the floor and the guys on the bench, how they were supporting their teammates, and of course the crowd was spectacular, but our whole bench was really into the game in a way that you have to be to win a game of this caliber.

Q. How far does tonight go in terms of them seeing it click on both ends, and what kind of impact

could that have?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it will have a lot of impact, because we played a really tough schedule so far, and we lost to some really good teams. Tonight, we played a good team and won.

So what we're able to do is grow and learn, and you never want, especially as a coach, because you take it personally. Because if game after game, you're doing the same things wrong, and the outcome is a loss, obviously we've got a lot of experience on our staff. We should be able to fix it. We should be able to improve it.

I think they see that our staff is going to work tirelessly to help them get better and make them understand how you have to believe in yourself and how you have to compete. It was a great performance in so many different ways, but it was not perfect, and I think that's the important thing to know and understand.

Because when we did miss a shot or turn it over, we went back and played defense and got a stop. We didn't let it -- because this team is a team that can really go on a run on you. That's kind of what they do. You know, all of a sudden, it's a 15-2 run, and you can only take so many time-outs. But we never let them do that to us tonight.

Q. You look at Nicholas there, his numbers kind of bely his actual performance because he's getting the long rebounds, playing defense, diving for loose balls, and coming off the bench, he seems to take his role, whatever it is.

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, the other day I said to him on the way to the pregame, I said I'm going to start him out, "I'm bring you off the bench and I need you to do what you do. You're going to play about the same number of minutes."

He said, "Okay, Coach, fine. That's what we'll do." He was awesome against Stetson. He was awesome in this game. Think about the run up out on the floor late, and obviously we're worried penetration, three-point shooting, but he was our center. I had him and four guards out there, and he needed to go get some rebounds that were really difficult to get but he flies and gets them. We had him fresh because he got in a little foul trouble. He probably would have played more than 17 minutes had he not gotten in foul trouble.

I think you're right. There's just no substitute for all of the things that he gets done for you on the floor in a positive way.

Q. This team and this season, I know it's a really vague question, but it's not the same kind of team

you've had for a few years.

COACH McCAFFERY: No, and I think that's what makes this business so much fun for me and my staff. These guys, it's early in their career and they are trying to figure it out, and it's our job to help them. But there's very little that I haven't seen or been through when it comes to young teams, experienced teams, teams with expectations, teams without expectation, mistake teams, great shooting teams.

I've been saying from the beginning, I really like this team. I really like this group. And it's going to be an interesting journey. It's not going to be smooth.

But to see them enjoy a victory like this after kind of what they have been through and celebrate in the locker room with Coach Olson, and that's what it's all about, and I think that can build confidence moving forward.

Q. 23 and 9 for Pete and he finally gets a win against Iowa State. What do you have to say about him?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, from the beginning, I think he was pretty determined that we were not going to lose this game. I mean, he put us on his back early offensively and I think everybody came with him. But I'm just so proud of what he's doing on the glass. I mean, he got some serious traffic rebounds that he had to sky for.

We run him around and we run him out on the break. I mean, that takes unbelievable energy. I'm trying to get him a blow right before each media time-out; he doesn't want to come out then. Played him 35 minutes and tried to strategically place that rest for him, because I knew we were going to need him down the stretch. And he handled the ball and moved the ball. He was great.

Q. Moss got a few buckets for you guys in the second half, especially attacking the basket.

COACH McCAFFERY: He's really good at that. So we put him in that position of running our press attack. We get him out there, get him flying, look down the floor, throw it to him. He's a great finisher, and he has great confidence in his ability and he gets there quickly. He is fast and quick, and he's explosive.

Q. A longer layoff than I guess you've had so far this year before the next one. How do you approach these next ten days or so?

COACH McCAFFERY: First thing you do is you let them enjoy this win and they get a little bit of rest. You're to this point, we had a lot of games quickly, we have some guys, just little nagging injuries and get them to feel better there, and go back to work Sunday.

