

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



Q. What sort of unique challenges has Ethan Happ present?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Really unique challenges. You're right. He's one of the best ball-handling bigs that you'll see. Playing with great confidence right now. He's a senior. He's an All-American. Tremendous versatility going right and left. You've seen him bringing in a lot more off the rebound, put it on the deck. Take it coast to coast.

But he pretty much can score from pretty much anywhere. I mean, he's not a 3-point shooter, but he kind of gets where he wants to get to. And he creates challenges for the defense -- are you doubling, are you not doubling? Who do you put on him? Where is he on the floor? Those kinds of things. That's what we've been working on.

Q. Is he someone that you're likely to double more than other guys?

COACH MCCAFFERY: He's a guy who would have your attention in terms of do we double. We're not a team that typically doubles a lot. We have doubled, we have doubled him in the past, but we typically don't do it all the time.

Q. You know he struggles from the free-throw line. Does that impact in any way the way you guys defend him?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Maybe only at the end of the game.

Q. What's your reaction after hearing the comments made by Gary Dolphin?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Really disappointing. I was disappointed in those comments. I think when one of our own attacks one of our players the way he did, it's inexcusable. And it's over. We dealt with it. And we're moving on. Getting ready for Wisconsin.

Q. Did you talk to your team about it?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I did. Yes, I talked to my team about it. And I think the prevailing feeling was just to talk about it and move past it.

Q. The player whose name was mentioned, did you

talk to him specifically?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I did. It was incredibly unfair. He has played extremely well for us. He plays hard. He's a good person. He didn't deserve it. But he's also a young guy with tremendous character. So I've been really impressed with him and how he's handled everything.

Q. How big of a difference is it with Trice being on Wisconsin this year?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Huge. He's playing as well as any guard we've faced on film. And he makes Davison better. Because Davison had to do it all year last year when Trice was out. He's shooting the ball with incredible accuracy from the 3. He's made 24 3s, shooting 60 percent. But he's also -- some guys are really good 3-point shooters; they shoot off the catch. He can shoot off the dribble from 3 and he's got a really good pull-up game.

But he's finding people. He's really directing their offense. And he makes Davison better, Happ better, Reuvers better, and Iverson better. And I think it's one of the reasons why they're ranked.

Q. One more question about Gary. The statement by Gary Barta, he mentioned "ongoing tensions." It kind of leaves open conjecture and speculation that there's problems between you and Gary. I'm not saying there is, but do you see why fans would think that and how do you address that?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think it's fairly well known we've had some issues. But we've gotten along fine. I'm disappointed in him.

Q. Did Gary Dolphin talk to the team?

COACH MCCAFFERY: No.

Q. Wisconsin is a team that likes to play slower. How do you keep your team from getting frustrated if they start to dictate the pace?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Every game's different. You don't worry about that so much. You play a team like UConn, they're going to press you. They're going to push it. You play a team like Wisconsin -- they're playing a little faster maybe than their reputation. They've got really good players. But at times they will move it, wait and use the whole clock.

But they'll come down and shoot it quick. They'll come down on a break. Like I said, Happ will take it off the rim and push it himself and go. So you just have to get ready to play that style.

Every game is different. Pitt was different from UConn and Wake different from Oregon. And this is our first league game, early. But kind of like last year, but we're playing 20. So right off the bat we have a ranked team coming in, it's a league game. So, it's a big game for us.

Q. Do you think they're going to want to slow it down --

COACH MCCAFFERY: I don't think that will be their game plan. They play at their pace. And sometimes they go fast and sometimes they go slow. I don't think they're coming out and saying, we're deliberately going to try to keep the game in the 50s. I don't think they're that way. Because they might shoot 24 3s and they might not. They might just hammer it inside. Depends on how the game goes and the flow of the game.

Q. Do you feel comfortable your team can play multiple tempo styles?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I do. I think we can. You prepare for the next opponent and how they play. And so we've played Wisconsin before. A lot of these guys are back. They're a different team. You've got not only Trice but Kobe King, some guys that were hurt last year that impacted them. But what happens sometimes, other guys get a chance.

Reuvers and Davison, they got -- Iverson got thrown into it. And consequently they're better and they're more confident this year. I think you're seeing that. You go on the road. You beat Xavier, you beat Stanford and NC State. They've got some really good wins.

Q. The way they were able to neutralize the bigs, sometimes teams use -- one thing that a team does is a template. I saw some different lineups in the Pitt game, but is it only a lineup thing or are there adjustments you can make to keep those guys on the floor when they want to double?

COACH MCCAFFERY: You have to adjust in how the game's going. They were doubling -- they were doubling big. They were doubling two guys sometimes. Just really wanted to get it out of their hands. That's one of the reasons we made 12 3s.

So times you downshift with a smaller lineup depending on what the other team has and what's working for you. So we're not going to change in terms of what we're going to try to do. But as the game goes on, clearly there's adjustments that have to be made.

Q. I know there were a lot of offensive fouls called in the game against Pitt. Brad Davison took five charges against NC State. What do you say to your team maintaining that aggression despite the way certain games are called with certain players?

COACH MCCAFFERY: You make them aware of it. You show them clips of it. When to go and not to go is always a decision you have to make. Because maybe they take a few more charges than another team doesn't mean other teams don't take charges.

You can't go flying into packs of people out of control and expect to have success against Wisconsin.

Q. Davison, seems like he's a spark for them and he's healthy this year. What does he bring to them? Seems like he brings a toughness to them.

COACH MCCAFFERY: He's a tough guy. He's a shooter. He's one of the guys, he's a better driver than I think people think he is. You look at him as a tough guy that makes 3s, then all of a sudden he's driving the ball to the basket and making plays for other people.

He and Trice seem to have a really good chemistry to me. So they're a handful.

Q. With the way both you and Wisconsin are performing so far this season compared to last season, is there a refreshed sense, with this being the first game in, knowing that this can have big implications on the top part of the Big Ten?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Yeah, we don't look at it that way. We look at, okay, it's the next game. We're undefeated. They have only one loss. They played Virginia tough. We're both ranked. But it's a conference game. It's Wisconsin.

We've had great games with them pretty much since I got here. It's a rivalry game in a lot of respects. And they're a team I think that a lot of people thought would be in the hunt despite the fact that their record wasn't what they thought it would be like last year.

Everybody assumed that this year they would be in the hunt because of Happ and the guys they had back who were now healthy. So it's a completely different team just like we're a completely different team.

Q. Media day, we talked about how before the year, the offseason it was about restarting and looking back and trying to figure out things again. With where this team is, there's still a lot of season left. But are you getting a different vibe from this team, maybe, as you guys get ready for Big Ten?

COACH MCCAFFERY: What we have is we have more weapons. If a couple guys have an off night, we can

survive it. It's happened already a couple of times. And sometimes when you have a shorter rotation and then anything goes wrong, it makes it difficult.

We've got guys that, Joe Wieskamp was the best player on the floor the other night. He didn't score as much when we were in New York; others did. And Garza was unstoppable, and he doesn't have a big game the other night. That's the kind of team we have. And it's nice to be able to have those kinds of options.

Q. How confident were you taking the court for that second half that your message got through, that it would be different than a year ago?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I felt really confident. This team has great character. They have an expectation for themselves. Sometimes through the course of the game you have to adjust. Pitt was really quick. Pitt played small. Pitt was aggressive.

And we talked about that before the game. But sometimes you have to go through it. And, okay, they're going to double. Now you actually have to deal with the double.

And the first couple of times Luka got it, he had two assists, because the whole world came on him. Those are the kinds of plays you have to make.

But in the second half I thought defensively holding them to 22 points was pretty impressive. And that's the kind of thing that I challenged them to do. I knew the offense would take care of itself. And even still we missed some shots coming down the stretch we would normally make, I thought. But we did enough to win because we got the stops we needed.

Q. Any lingering effects for Tyler; he took a pretty good shot?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think he's fine.

Q. What are your thoughts on the Big Ten as a whole, the league looks tough top to bottom?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Well, I've said that before. It's the best it's been since I've been in the league. This is my ninth year. Top to bottom. I think a lot of times people look at who were the top two or three teams and that defines how good a conference is.

But top to bottom, this league is brutal. Every team has depth. Every team's got veteran talent. And every game is going to be difficult. But I've said it before, that's what you sign up for when you come here, go to any school in the Big Ten.

Q. What kind of effort do you need from Ryan Kriener now with the news that comes along with

him deciding to redshirt?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Ryan Kriener is a critical part of our team moving forward. He's a versatile guy. He's got length. He's got experience now. He's a really confident young man. But anytime you've got another 6'10" guy that can stretch the floor and make 3s but also has post moves go off either shoulder. He can rim protect with his 7'3" wing span and block some shots. Valuable person to have. I trust him out there pretty much at any point in the game.

Q. Tyler said after the game that he hasn't been playing to a standard of which he holds himself. How have you seen him go about the last couple of days?

COACH MCCAFFERY: He has to be careful not to be too tough on himself. He's been tremendous. And the other night he didn't get as many points as he would have liked. But he had a terrific game. What did he have? Nine points, eight rebounds, three assists, no turns. He got the two biggest offensive rebounds of the game. He felt terrible about missing those free throws. But he's been making his free throws, shooting right around 70 percent. So I'm proud of him.

I want him to be hungry and I want him to sort of set the bar high for himself. And if he's disappointed in how he played, I respect that. But I think you've got to temper that a little bit because we don't win that game without him. He was good.

And it was a different kind of game. It was sloppy at times. And there were missed shots. And different things that you would have expected to go another way and they didn't.

Q. Have you talked to Tyler and Luka about the importance of staying out of foul trouble?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I haven't made that a focal point. I kind of want them to play the way they play. I think they're both pretty good at sliding their feet, putting their hands up, and not picking up inadvertent fouls that pile up on you.

Our goal is never to foul a lot anyway. We want to get fouled and not put people on the line for free throws.