

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

Thursday, December 13, 2018

Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



Q. How is Cordell? Is he going to be able to play Saturday?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think so.

Q. Has he been practicing well?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, he's been at practice. He doesn't do everything, but he's there working.

Q. Is it possible he could play the rest of the season?

COACH McCAFFERY: It's a possibility, I guess, but it's up to him. It really is legitimately day-to-day; how he feels.

Q. Will he practice on a limited basis throughout the year?

COACH McCAFFERY: That's hard to say, too. It is now.

Q. How will that change what you do on the court?

COACH McCAFFERY: It gives us more depth, and he's a different kind of player. I think you saw it the other night when we played Iowa State, what he brought to the table. He's a competitor. He's an experienced guy. He's got some versatility. It's clearly a benefit.

Q. How is Joe doing? Is he better?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, slowly. He's still not a hundred percent but he's getting closer.

Q. With Baer's better start, how much of everything last year was because of that pinkie early and how much has he kind of adjusted?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know. I think that's hard to say. Obviously, it didn't help the start of our season. It didn't help the start of his season. He wasn't the same initially, but he got healthy.

I think you're talking about a guy who is now a fifth-year senior who is a really good player. He is incredibly versatile and is playing really well. Playing with great confidence. When you're playing with that kind of confidence, you impact the game in so many different ways and that's what he does.

Q. You have obviously seen a lot of AJ Green over

the years. Thoughts on how he's translated to the college game?

COACH McCAFFERY: Very well. But, everybody would have expected that. His game is pretty complete. He can dribble, pass and shoot. He's got size. He can score in bunches. He can load people up.

He's always played the game with great confidence, and sometimes you see that not translate, but that's not been the case with him. He's kind of playing with the same kind of confidence and aggressiveness that he always has. It's sort of been a seamless transition, I guess you'd say, for him.

Q. Going back to Baer, we hear a lot about the football program and them bringing in walk-ons and a lot of them having great careers. With Baer, what do you get out of it as a coach when you see a guy like Baer comes in as a walk-on, very thin kid, but works his way through getting a scholarship and like you said, he's a fifth-year senior and has been a big part of this team this year so far?

COACH McCAFFERY: He's been a huge part of this team since he got here, he really has been. I'm thrilled for him. It's been win/win for everybody.

It's been great for us. He's a little different than everybody else we have, and you know, you almost get to the point where I sort of get tired of people referring to him as a walk-on. He was a walk-on when he got here. He's not a walk-on now, and he's proven at the highest level how good he is.

Recruiting is not an exact science. There's a lot of people that fall into that category, end up at places that probably aren't the level where they are. They could have gone somewhere else. In his case, he didn't get recruited very highly, and you know, we were the benefit of that.

Clearly he's proven that he can play anywhere for anybody, and I'm just glad he plays for us.

Q. What was your message to him when you were trying to get him to come over here?

COACH McCAFFERY: We were going to give him a chance. I thought he was really good. I was

impressed with him. I thought he could grow and develop. You look at his body, and he's got a great basketball body. At that time he didn't have a lot of weight on him, but he's got size and length. He could put on the deck. He was always a scorer more than a shooter. He developed into a shooter because he took the time to get better.

Q. You grew up in the Big Five and experienced a lot of rivalries in your career. With the possibility of not playing Drake and UNI anymore, do you have mixed emotions on that? You've coached on that level and this level.

COACH McCAFFERY: You're right. I think the Big Five is a little bit different kind of comparison, because when that started, everybody, all five teams played at one location, and they played doubleheaders and it went on for years and years and years.

This is a little different. We just started this a few years ago. Even in the Big Five, it went away for a minute, if you remember -- it started with Villanova and Temple. They were trying to sort of pull away from the rest back in the day when. They had great programs.

Scheduling becomes confusing now and they just changed it again with the NET formula.

So it's just one of those things. I have enjoyed the event. I have tremendous respect for Ben and his program. The players that he has are very good. It's going to be a tough game for us. But we'll just move on with whatever schedule we have.

Q. Do you ever see home and away, Drake and UNI coming back, or is it just too hard now?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't really think about it. Down the road, I wouldn't say it's not a possibility. I wouldn't say no. I wouldn't say yes.

Q. AJ Green, is that a guy you have get physical with and try to limit him?

COACH McCAFFERY: You have to be careful with that because then you put him on the free throw line, you better guard him closely. I mean, you'd better pay attention to him. You'd better know where he is. But that's what makes them dangerous because as good as he is, they have other guys that make threes.

They have some athletes. They have got some size. I don't know what the situation is with Austin Phyfe who is a very good player and a key piece. He's been in and out. I hope he's doing well. I have a lot of respect for him.

But McDonnell has been playing well. Holterhaus has been playing well. Spencer is making shots. Wyatt's

making shots. Brown's had some really good games.

They have a lot of ways they can go. They have kind of gone small at times. AJ's got the ball most of the time. He's kind of the key to everything. But they are surrounding him with people who can make shots, who can make plays, so that makes him dangerous.

Q. You've got six players in your rotation from east state, and obviously UNI does. Does it surprise you at all, or what do you know now about Iowa high school basketball, that you maybe did not know when you took this job?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think I know a lot in terms of quality of programs, quality of coaches. I honestly believe that they should loosen the rules a little bit and let these kids go play in tournaments in other states. Play more games. They can only play in a one-day -- a one-day shootout in a bordering state.

If Iowa City West, or any other school gets invited to a tournament in California, they should be able to go. If they get a chance to play on TV, they should be able to play on TV, because I think there are talented players in this state and the only way they get to really show that is on the AAU circuit, and I don't think it should be that way, because I have tremendous respect for the quality of coaching in this state.

I've done this for a while and I've done it on a national level and I've done it on a regional level, so I'm a pretty good judge of talent, but also, whether the kids are getting coached or not. And they are clearly getting coached in this state.

There's some tremendous teams, tremendous coaches, tremendous players, and we'll continue recruiting this state hard, because I've been able to see the production that they have given this program, and it obviously had been done long before I got here and will continue as long as I'm here, I can tell you that.

Q. What do you think about Ben Jacobson's team, what characteristics --

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, they are going to defend. They are going to share the ball. They are going to execute their stuff. They are going to compete. Battle you on the glass. You have to beat them. They are not going to mistake their way into a loss.