

# Chicago Legends presented by Roman

Saturday, December 21, 2019

**Fran McCaffery**

**CJ Fredrick**

**Luka Garza**

Iowa Hawkeyes

Iowa - 77, Cincinnati - 70

MODERATOR: We'll get started with questions for the student-athletes, C.J. Fredrick and Luka Garza.

**Q. For any of you, what was it like to overcome the 24 turnovers in the game, especially late -- especially the ones you had in the second half that almost cost you guys the game?**

CJ FREDRICK: It was big. After a timeout we just kind of collectively came together and said, be strong with the ball. And we were never in doubt with each other. We stayed connected as a group. And I think after that we only had about two turnovers and finished the game. So that's what we pride ourselves on is just staying together and just staying locked in and I think that's what you saw late in the game.

LUKA GARZA: Credit to them. They were a really aggressive defensive team. They tried to get up into you and force those turnovers. And I think we let that get to us a little bit during that stretch in the second half when we got a lead. And it's a good lesson for us going forward, just to make sure that that can't happen again, and if it does, we still find a way to pull the win out. You got to win ugly too.

**Q. Can you talk about the lift that Bakari gave you tonight and the big shots that he made?**

LUKA GARZA: He was tremendous. He's just been doing everything Coach has asked of him, so far, playing different positions, just working hard, waiting for his opportunity, and he got it tonight and stepped up to it. That's what he presents to our team, he's just a hard worker who is going to come in and do his thing. And we all have confidence in him and we have seen this in him since the start of the season, and even in the summer, he's been playing really well for us. And it was great to see him have a night like this. He deserves that. And just really proud of him and looking forward to see what he continues to do for us.



CJ FREDRICK: Like Luka said. We love him, and we have tremendous confidence in him and just being patient and waiting for his time. And I think you saw, like, he brings a little bit of everything to the game, and I think you saw, he's a big-time player.

**Q. C.J., what did this performance mean for you being from the Cincinnati area against this team?**

CJ FREDRICK: It was a lot of fun. I had a lot of friends and family here, made the drive to come watch. It was just really another -- it was just another game. I didn't try to make anything bigger than, really, what it was. It was just another game and tried to execute the game plan.

**Q. Luka, you played against this team in the tournament last year. Obviously, with a new coach and turned over roster. How were they different or how do they compare at all to the team you saw in the tournament last year?**

LUKA GARZA: I think they still have the reputation of being a really aggressive defensive team, like I said earlier, and I think that was their mantra last year, and I think it's continuing with the new coach.

Offensively, they do a little different things than they did last year and I think they're just as good offensively. They lost a couple guys but they still got a couple in Williams and Scott, who were tremendous against us last year. I know Scott and Cumberland really hurt us last year in that tournament game. So they still got a lot of pieces and they're a tremendous team. They're going to make some noise in the AAC.

**Q. Luka, where do you think this game was won in the last minutes?**

LUKA GARZA: I think, definitely, on the glass we got some key rebounds. I think as a team we got stops when we needed to. When we weren't scoring on the offensive end, where our offense wasn't flowing as well as we wanted it to, they were getting up into us, like I said, and we weren't really getting the shots we wanted, so we needed to make key stops down there. So credit to everyone down in that zone that was moving around. And we had to rebound out of that zone and I think we did a good job of that.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

CJ FREDRICK: It was just, the plan was just getting a

little sloppy, uncharacteristic turnovers. Coach called a really good timeout just trying to settle us down.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: There wasn't a lot of talk. There was a lot of listening.

LUKA GARZA: That's -- what he said. (Laughing).

FRAN MCCAFFERY: C.J. was being nice. That's why I love him.

MODERATOR: All right. Thanks, guys. We'll let the players join the team. Any questions for Coach?

**Q. What did they improve on?**

FRAN MCCAFFERY: The one thing that I think has been consistent with this group, they have really done an amazing job of sticking to the game plan. Taking the information, every game. And they did that to a 15-point lead. We got away from that in that one stretch. This is a proud and storied program. They're going to come after us. They're quick. They're -- they have athletic power. They're going to be in the gap. They're going to be in the passing lane. The X is going to be on the O. It's going to be heat. If you have it, there's going to be heat, and if you're trying to get open to get it, all right? So we worked on V cuts to get open, keep your dribble, keep your spacing, flare screen them in. And we just kind of got a little bit casual, and we just kind of, we were just passing the ball to the next guy. There was no purpose to it, and that's not like this group. So give them credit. We -- they forced us into 24 turnovers. But again, we did all those things before that to get a 15-point lead. So we were still right there. Now somebody's got to step up and now we've got to get consecutive stops, which we did. The zone was really good, the press was good, but you say, okay, you turned it over 24 times, how do you survive that? Well, you survive it by going 48, 31 on the glass and holding them to 34 percent from the field and make 11 threes. So there's different ways to win a basketball game. And truth of the matter is, these games before Christmas, you watch, and I don't care which ones you watch, they all have a kind of a strange flow to them sometimes. How much practicing did Cincinnati have? How much practice did we have? We had two guys get operated on Thursday and Friday. We got a guy that didn't make the trip because he's sick. Everybody's going through the same thing. That's a team that has some new bodies that they're trying to figure out, and they had a really, I mean, special season last year, 28 wins. A lot of guys back, but a lot of new faces and they're trying to figure it out too. They have a freshman point guard, we have a freshman point guard. We need to get him a new pair of shoes, apparently. But he'll be great moving forward.

And the bottom line is, when somebody's out,

somebody else has to step up. We had guys step up. Bakari, he went tonight and was absolutely spectacular.

**Q. I was going to ask you about Bakari. Is this sort of the kind of moment that you were expecting for or expecting looking for when you brought him into the program a fifth year senior?**

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Well, you know what, I've been saying this since he got here, and I think you guys think I'm just saying it. I'm only saying it because I'm seeing it. You heard what Luka said. Since the summertime, he's been a really good player, okay. He can play the point, he can play the 2, he can make threes, he can make plays, he's good in ball screens, he defends, he plays the 3 spot, he knows all 3 spots. He did make one mistake tonight, but he hasn't played a ton of point, and we have had J-Bo, Joe, and Connor in that position. Tonight he stepped up and was huge. We're going to need multiple ball handlers against that pressure. That's why we tried -- there was times we wanted to go big, but we felt like we needed to have four handlers out there. I think a lot of teams, moving forward, are going to have to make those decisions against this team, the way they press. They really had a lot of success with it against Tennessee, who is a really good team, and they had success with us. So, fortunately, we have multiple handlers that ultimately got the job done.

**Q. Obviously, this isn't the first time you've brought your team into this building. You come here annually yourself as part of media day. Talk about the atmosphere every time you bring your team to Chicago?**

FRAN MCCAFFERY: We have, obviously, a tremendous amount of alumni that live in this area. Hawk fans respond every time we come here. Let's go Hawks cheer at Northwestern is as loud as you're ever going to here it. We come to this building, it's the same thing. We when we started talking about this game, this double-header, didn't know at first who we would play, didn't know how our fans would respond, and, boy, were they huge, especially when we gave up the lead. They hung in there with us and helped us get the big win.

**Q. I know you have a lot of history with the Fredrick family. You coached C.J.'s uncle. What's it been like coaching him and what's made him so effective so early?**

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Well, I will tell you, he's a blessing to coach because he's zero maintenance. That means on and off the floor. What do you need me to do, Coach? Got it. And he goes and does it. You don't have to keep reminding him, you don't have to push him, you don't have to challenge him. I've got to

come up with something today to challenge him.

His uncle was the same way. They're both gamers. Big shots, big plays, excel in the moment. And that comes from being smart and tough, and it also comes from preparation. He really works hard. Came out of a great high school program, Covington Catholic, played for a great coach and just is a guy that keeps working, and I trust him. So I wish I could tell you that it was something miraculous that I'm doing. It's not. It's him.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Well, they're a team that I think, really, runs good man stuff, you know, pitch, pitch, pitch, run off the ball, screen, iso the post, iso Cumberland at the elbow. There's all kinds of stuff, I mean, we've watched every game they played, sometimes twice, all right. So you can prepare your team for what might come, but they run so much good stuff, you can't predict what's coming. But if you play zone, they're all right there in front of you. Where's Cumberland? He's right there. Okay? We don't have to worry about him coming through and coming back to the elbow, and they clear everybody out, and he's got an iso drive right. No, he's right there and we've got people in the gaps, so there's nowhere for him to drive to. Now, you're going to live with some open 3s. We pushed up on both Cumberlands and we lived with the other folks. I thought we did a good job defending the high post because Scott's really good there. He hurt us last year in the tournament from that position, so we really paid attention to him there.

**Q. What was -- was Joe too -- was it just nerves, do you think? Do you think he was a little too amped up tonight?**

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Well I mean he fell the first three times he got the ball. I mean, he's quick, but like I said, he went and changed his shoes at halftime. And then he was in foul trouble and then BK was playing so well and we went with Connor, C.J., BK, with those guys. I really wanted to get him back in, but he'll settle down, he's a really good player, this is all part of the growth process. He's really, he's young, but he's a competitor, he'll have an opportunity in the next one.