

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

Sunday, February 10, 2019

Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball

Iowa 80, Northwestern 79

Q. With three seconds left, what were your instructions? Was it to get the ball to Bohannon or to an open shooter?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We ran a play with multiple options. It's up to the players to execute, then it's up to the inbounder to make the right decision.

It's one of those things where if it ends the way it did, you know Jordan is going to make the shot. He's been doing it since fifth grade. But you don't want to force it there because it might not be there.

We had options for Cook. We had options for Joe. We had options for Isaiah. Connor has to read it. He made the perfect read. Jordan made the shot.

Q. What does it say about Jordan, the last two games he's the one to carry you?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He did it against Penn State, too. He's had an amazing year in that respect. He's fearless. That's why he's got to be on the floor.

Q. Seemed like Jordan was scuffling earlier in the game --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Give credit to Northwestern, they were up in his face. That's kind of how teams are playing him. So as the game goes on, you got to loosen him up, move him off the ball, get him in some different kinds of actions. Sometimes it's sets, sometimes it's motion. We run a couple different motions, late-game action. Now he's in different locations.

If he's bringing it down the floor, they know where he is, they can get up into his face. We set a ball screen for him, they can trap it, limit his shot opportunities.

To his credit, he didn't put up any bad ones.

Q. In a nutshell, how do you make a comeback like that? What are the essential elements of getting it started and keeping it going?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, there are a couple things. Number one, we established early that the press was



going to be effective. We established early that we were going to drive the ball. We were in the bonus with 12 minutes to go in the half. Those are things that are working in your benefit if you're down coming down the stretch.

Also we were in the double bonus by that point. So it gives you an opportunity to keep the spacing the way you need it. Now what you have to do is execute. What we had was a small lineup on the floor. We had one time where there was a mistake made because Joe was in the four spot, he wasn't sure what he was supposed to do. That's the only mistake we made coming down the stretch. Of course, he made the big three.

We ran something for him, for Isaiah, a couple things for Jordan. Then you have to manage the clock. The activity in the press was as good as it's been all year. We differentiated how we played it. We can play it aggressively. We can play it more as a contained press. We did all three throughout the game. Then we started trapping them on the sides, chasing them on the sides, got some trapping situations. Consequently, they weren't as aggressive scoring the ball.

All those things together. There can't be any panic. You got to execute. Got to know what we're doing. You got to stay together. They did all that.

Q. What were some of the reasons you got in the hole?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think you got to give Northwestern credit. They started the season really well. They've been struggling lately getting wins. They're right there. They haven't been shooting the ball well. They came out aggressive.

Vic Law, look at the last six games, he's not making shots. Averaging 18 points a game when we played them last time down there. He's one of the better players in our league. He comes out aggressive, scores 19 in the first half. Same with Turner. They started bringing him off the bench. Taylor can score it. Pardon is a guy, locked him up in the first half, then the second half he got away from us a little bit.

They have a good team. That's one of the reasons why we were down. Chris had them ready. They were

battling defensively. They were physical. One of the reasons we were in the bonus. Maybe a little too physical at times, but they tried to establish that.

One stretch, if you remember, in the second half where it didn't seem like the ball was going to fall no matter what we did, that's a credit to them.

Q. Not every good shooter likes the big moments. What is so different about him than other guys you've coached?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I would say this. I haven't had too many like him, that have that kind of stroke, consistently make shots like that. I've had a few. I will say this. The ones that I've had wanted to shoot it in that situation. They have such supreme confidence in their ability to make it, they want to shoot it. That's who he is.

Q. Joe had to grind a little bit. Seemed like his back was bothering him. Talk about his effort.

FRAN McCAFFERY: He was a little sore. He'll be fine.

Q. A win like this at this point in the season, you pull it out of thin air, what can that do for a team down the stretch?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it can do a lot. It gets everybody believing in each other. You're not going to play a perfect game. You can still win when you're a little sideways defensively in the first half, a little sideways offensively in the second half.

We can mix it up, get something out of our press, run our late-game stuff, switch the lineup, put some different guys in there, see what we can come up with.

Then the other thing is every game is different people stepping up. That's the beautiful thing about this team.

Q. With the long Big Ten season, there's going to be ebbs and flows, some games look easy, some difficult. For the first 30 plus minutes, as you mentioned, couldn't hit shots. By finally grinding out like that, what is that going to do next week for this team?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's an incredible feeling in that locker room. The sense of accomplishment is a little different when you win one like that, when you stay together, you stay connected, you just keep fighting. That's always as a coach what you want your guys to do.

You're right, it was hard. It just didn't look like it was going to happen today. I kept looking up there saying, There's enough time. Felt like 15 with not much time left, It's going to be really hard.

If you manage the clock properly, you get a couple stops, we're in the bonus, mix in a couple threes, it's five possessions. That's all it is. They understood that.

So moving forward, this is the toughest part of the season, like you said. The second half of the Big Ten, it's a grind. Everybody is tired. But we're just going to keep plugging away here.