

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



Q. Just talk about the importance of getting a win for this team right now?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think that's important, but I think it's important how you get a win. What do you do? Are you correcting some of the deficiencies that had been problematic for us? Obviously, five turnovers in a game, we've been much better in that area recently, so that's good. We outrebounded them. That's really good.

I think defensively in the first half, I'm not sure we can play much better. We're up 16. We missed nine free throws. Second half we were a little lax again with our ball screen defense and our recovery and rotations out of that. We got a little complacent with a 20-point lead. Got it to 13, back to 18 whatever, can't do that.

But I thought our activity level and productivity from a lot of different people was really impressive. It's great to see Pete on a night that he's not making shots, like he normally does, have 7 assists, no turns. Big time.

Q. In the beginning of the year Isaiah was kind of on the bench a little bit. Now he's getting an awful lot of time. We know he's shooting well, but what's he doing to earn that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I just think he's got a better understanding of everything that he needs to do. That takes time, and everybody's impatient. We all are. The players are. He wanted to play. But I thought he had great decision-making skills tonight: When to go, when not to go, when to shoot, when not to shoot, when to move it on, when there was time and space to drive it. What was the time and score. He played with great confidence. I thought his activity level defensively, you know, he's not a big mistake guy, but he's got great sort of recovery, closing ability.

So I've said this before, if he makes an incorrect read defensively, he sprints to where he's supposed to be and gets there quickly. Can cover up for his own mistakes and then can cover up for other people's mistakes because of the same speed and quickness that he has.

Q. In the situation with Ahmad how scared were

you?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I was really scared because he's not a drama guy. I think it really scared him because he jumped so high and landed so awkwardly. But when I went out to the floor, Brad asked him, Did you hear a pop? He said, no. So I thought maybe it was a hyperextension, something like that so they took him back and tested everything. He'll be fine.

Q. Defensively even the whole bench was involved. Is that kind of a product of that team meeting that the guys had?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think -- yeah, I guess. I don't read a whole lot into team meetings. Everybody thinks they're the cure all. Shouldn't be having team meetings, that's the way I look at it. No team meetings should be necessary. You should take care of your business when the game is played.

We have smart, intelligent guys with character. They know what they have to do. That said, the point that you made I thought was absolutely tremendous. The support our players on the floor receive from the bench, regardless who was in, that is what you want to see. As a coach, you also want to see that.

Q. I think you said after the Memphis game Peter was dealing with it. It was an impingement, I think, is what you called it.

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's got a sore shoulder. Shoulder hurts.

Q. Has that bothered him at all after that game and that contact that he had?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It doesn't seem like it. But you probably should ask him. It didn't stop him from shooting, you know? So didn't hurt him that much.

Q. Cordell is something like 23 out of 27 from the floor the last three games since cracking the starting lineup. Could you comment on his play?

FRAN McCAFFERY: The thing about it is he knows what's a good shot and what's not a good shot. He's got great hands, great touch. He's crafty around the basket. You know, we'll keep throwing the ball, because good things happen. Obviously that's the first thing, 23 for 27. That jumps out at you. But he can make passes, and he doesn't put his head down and spin into traffic and fall over and turn it over that leads

to a transition basket. He knows when to go and when not to go. That's not often the case with young players.

Q. Where's his foot work at compared to somebody his age that you've seen before?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's as good as anybody I've been around.

Q. When you have a guy like Isaiah who sat out a year, are you not sure what you're going to get when he finally plays?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I mean, he sat out two summers, okay. That put him behind. He was here, obviously, all last year and was at practice everyday. He ran the scout team, tried to learn what we do, how we do it. It just took him a little longer. He's still figuring it out.

But what he is a talented player who wants to be really good. He wants to be a great teammate. He wants us to win. So, I mean, he's on a path that has all of us ecstatic for him. Because you watch a kid who had some bumps in the road getting here, and not everything is smooth for everybody, so I'm really proud.

Q. What about those turnover numbers, what changed for you guys?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think probably a lot of things. We're intelligent in our decision-making. Sometimes we're jamming it quick because we want to play fast. Well, that doesn't mean we have to jam it inside the first guy that goes like this. The first guy that catches it on the wing, puts his head down and drives. No. One-dribble, kick, two-dribble throwback, you know, ball screen roll, random screens, get it swung from side-to-side. Go when you have space. Then take better shots, and ultimately that should increase your shooting percentage and cut down on turnovers. A lot of people like to shoot it quick because they think that cuts down on turnovers. The quicker I shoot the ball, the less chance I have to turn it over. There's a lot to be said for that and playing that way.

But a lot of times they're threes, and we like to shoot threes and we'll shoot a ton of them, but there is a right time and a wrong time to shoot them. And there was one stretch late in the first half where we jacked three straight possessions and we were in the double bonus. We didn't throw it inside, we didn't drive the ball. We've got to know better than that.

Q. You have three different freshmen scoring at least opt 20 points in a game. How encouraging is that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Very encouraging. We have a young team and the thought process was those guys have to produce for us to be good. We can only count

on Pete to do so much. Dom Uhl and Ahmad were never huge scorers. They can score, both of them, but they're not huge scorers. The guys in that freshman class are guys that can score the ball.

Really proud of Nicholas Baer. I took him out of the starting lineup, Ahmad Wagner is fabulous, and Nicholas is equally good coming off the bench. Didn't hang his head. Coach, whatever you need me to do. Start, come off the bench. I love his energy level and his awareness and offensive talent coming off the bench.

Q. Speaking of that, what led that to decision; was it something Ahmad did?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I thought last game Ahmad was spectacular, and I thought it would really help our team to have Nicholas come off the bench. Ahmad deserved it and I knew Nicholas would be fine with it.

Q. How did you think Amhad played defense against Newton?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Really good. And you guys don't watch as much film on a particular team as we do. Newton's pretty good. He averaged 18 points a game last year. He's averaging 18 points a game this year. He's a 47% three-point shooter for the whole season last year. He's shooting 47% this year.

So you have to get after a guy like him. You can't have him coming in here and getting 30, 25 points, you know. He still got 12, but we held him to 6 under his average, and he never got going. That's how we were able to get that double digit lead so quickly.

Q. You're a big three-point shooting team, but you have a pretty big three-point shooting team coming to town on Thursday. Though they only scored eight tonight, is that a bit of a concern right now?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you know, our numbers aren't good. Forget about tonight collectively for all the games that we've played. We're giving up too high of a percentage. A lot of it starts with ball screen defense. Sometimes it's transition defense. Sometimes it's just dribble penetration, drive and kick, and that's kind of been the problem for us. But we have to be locked in on Thursday, that's for sure.

Q. Going off that, have you looked at Iowa State at all?

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, I have not. We'll start tonight.

Q. Can you kind of talk about what Jok's performance has been in the early stages of the season have been, and kind of what you think about that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you look tonight, and he's

got 7 assists, no turns, 8 rebounds, he had 10 rebounds in the last game. Any coach is going to be proud of that from your senior leader. He's proven that he's human. He doesn't make every shot. He missed a couple tonight, but his energy level and his effectiveness. And part of the reason why Isaiah gets 21, and Cordell gets 21 is because Pete was giving the ball up. So we were able to play through him, play off of him, and that's what you're going to be able to do. Otherwise teams lock into one or two guys and you have no chance.