

Big Ten Conference Basketball Media Days

Thursday October 19, 2017

Fran McCaffery

Iowa Hawkeyes

THE MODERATOR: Up next is Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery. Coach, an opening statement.

COACH MCCAFFERY: I really like this team. I say that all the time. But I really mean it. It's the deepest team we've ever had. We had an opportunity this summer to practice 10 extra times and travel overseas and play four games, assimilate our younger players -- Luka Garza and Jack Nunge and Connor McCaffery into the lineup. I think that puts us in the place where with the experience we have coming back, our young guys getting ready we can absorb the loss of the Big Ten's leading scorer in Peter Jok.

Q. You just mentioned having to replace a guy like Peter Jok, and seems like last year you had a lot of guys that helped you bridge that transition when he was injured. What is that like guiding that when you rely on a guy like that for so long, he does so many great things and you have to have guys ready to take over when he leaves. How do you bridge that sort of transition during the latter part of the season and into this year?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think what happened was it really manifested itself in the beginning of the season. We were really relying on Pete. I remember the Memphis game, Pete goes for 42.

We lose 100-92. The message was if we don't start playing defense we're going to struggle to win. And if we don't give him some help, then we're not going to win either, not in this league.

So we started playing better defense. Others started stepping up. You knew it was going to happen with Tyler Cook. You knew it was going to happen with Bohannon. But it was Nicholas Baer, Cordell Pems, Isaiah Moss, and the critical thing there is with Pete gone and having already played four games overseas, those individuals have now stepped into new rolls as well, particularly Isaiah Moss.

He's a guy that's incredibly talented, had phenomenal games last year. There were times when I didn't play him down the stretch. I played Peter Jok and Nicholas Baer.

But this year it's going to be his opportunity to shine. And you know he's playing really well. Played really well over the summer. Shot close to 70 percent for the trip, shooting mostly 3s.

Shot well over 50 percent from 3 on the trip. So there's a guy who is now in his third year of college that's, I think, ready to step up and fill that role.

Q. What did Jordan Bohannon's play mean for your team last year and what are you expecting from him this year?

COACH MCCAFFERY: It's interesting, because obviously the position was open upon the departure of Mike Gesell. It was either going to go to Christian Williams or Jordan Bohannon. The season started with Christian in the starting lineup. He was playing really well. It ended up flipping with, Jordan in the starting lineup. Christian coming off the bench. So the position was well handled. Both are dramatically different. But I think what we had in that position with Jordan was a legitimate scoring option. He could make eight 3s, like he did against Maryland. He could go for a big night.

But the other thing he did was make big shots late in close games. Did it against Michigan. Did it a number of times. He has the ability to hit those dagger 3s and those big shots late.

So that gives you a weapon. Especially when you're trying to get the ball inside to Cordell Pemsil or Tyler Cook. And Ryan Kriener this year, Luka Garza and Jack Nunge, we have legitimate low-post scoring threats. You have to surround them with guys who can pass and guys who can make threes. So you have Jordan Bohannon, Isaiah Moss and Nicholas Baer, Brady Ellingson. I think we have that.

Q. You've got Tyler and Jordan here. They both mentioned you want them to be leaders this year. Why them? And what have they shown in practice so far to step into those roles?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Well, they're going to be starters. I think you want leadership out of your starting lineup. Jordan, of course, is the point guard. You want leadership out of that position.

And you just want guys that establish themselves as two of the better players in our league to kind of take that next step. They were all-rookie players, and you hope eventually they become all-league players.

Q. Just your thoughts on the 20-game schedule and, I guess, specifically the protected in-state and regional rivalries, and why or why not that's a good thing for the conference and college basketball at large?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think in terms of the rivalries, I think that's for the fans in many respects, it creates interest in that state, television interest. So I think it stands to reason, when you have traditional rival, you play those teams. I think it's good that our league recognized that and has provided those opportunities.

The 20-league schedule, I think, is a matter of just sort of what you have to do. I think the analytics will tell you that playing 20 league games will provide a greater strength of schedule for all of us.

Typically, the numbers tell you it gets one more team in per year, per conference. And we all want that. Certainly for us, last year we were First Four out. I think we were the first team out. So by playing two more league games, there's so many positives there. I think, TV, once -- great TV matchups, the fans want it. But ultimately, I think it helps your strength of schedule, your RPI, and I think it plays well with the committee.

Q. You were talking about regionalization of part of the rationale for that. What has ever come up when the coaches have talked about making the Big Ten into two divisions the way football is? Has that ever been a consideration in trying to foster a regional feel in this conference that's so sprawling now?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think that's a legitimate question, but I have to be honest with you, we really didn't talk about divisions. It makes sense when you talk about certainly my previous answer, but that's not something that really had any legs in terms of the conversation.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts Transcript by ASAP Sports

Rev #1 by #188 at 2017-10-19 14:06:00 GMT