

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

Thursday, November 9, 2017

Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



Q. If you had to give us a brief synopsis at the moment, how is your rotation looking heading into this opening weekend?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Not much different from last week. Obviously, Nicholas Baer is out. So that changes that position. Ahmad started. He'll start again. And Jack will step in there, and Dom Uhl. So we'll be fine.

Q. Is there a target that you want to have for that to be solidified, what you are doing rotation-wise?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: You know, there really isn't one. We'll just go with what we've got.

Q. How has Jack kind of fit in at the three?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Very well. I thought he could, but you truly don't know until you have a chance to watch him. A lot of times guys can play another position offensively, but they can't defensively. And he's equally adept in both areas. He can put on the deck, he can shoot it outside, he can drive to the hole, and he can post up.

But defensively he moves his feet really well, and he takes advantage of his length. Kind of like Jarrod used to. He can guard smaller people. He gives you a lot of flexibility, because we can still play him at four or five, but then also three.

Q. Baer has been that energy guy for you off the bench, the guy that sets the tempo with that second unit. Who have you seen that can really take that role over?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I think Cordell would be really good at that. He's playing extremely well. Truthfully, he's playing well enough to be a starter. Tyler and Luka are going to start, but Cordell's going to play a lot. He's taking his game to another level.

Q. Will Isaiah be ready tomorrow?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, he'll be fine.

Q. How are you defensively right now? I know it's early. Where would you say you guys are?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Not where we need to be by any means. We haven't played many defenses other than

man-to-man. So we'll play other defenses. We'll mix defenses.

But that's not a solution, because when you play other defenses, you have to have the same qualities. You have to be connected, you have to play with energy, and you have to play with a sense of urgency.

Could be a good solution for our team with our length and our size and our depth. I've always been primarily a man-to-man team. I thought we should have a man-to-man team and then mix in some of the others.

So hopefully we'll get better than we've been.

Q. With Connor and Jordan playing at the same time, I know we talked about that after a couple of exhibitions, how have you seen that progress more in practice the last week or so? Are you liking where that's at now?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Truthfully, we haven't done it much in practice. I've been working Brady with that group and Connor and Maishe with the other group.

You're right. It's probably at some point we'll put those two guys together. But this week in particular, I wanted to get Isaiah back and in playing shape and get him comfortable. Because he was really playing well.

Then when he first came back he felt okay, but his game was a little off, which is typically what happens when you sit out for eight days or so, whatever it was. He had a really good day yesterday and he's been playing well, so I'm happy for him. We need him playing that way.

Q. Are you going to need more from Ahmad, and what would you like to see out of him?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, we do. I have got to get him a few minutes, and he'll get those now with Nicholas being out.

So for him it's going to be energy, offensive rebounding, defense. He's scoring the ball a lot better. He's shooting it better, he's driving the ball better. He's always been a pretty good guy off the dribble, making plays for others.

We'll need that. If you want to play the three spot, you

have to do that a little bit more than you do as a driving four.

So I think little by little he's gotten more reps at that position. But I can still play him at four or five as well if I need to.

Q. I know you want Isaiah to be more assertive than he was maybe a year ago. How do you go about doing that other than just telling him to be more assertive?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, he's doing it. He knows he's going to have the opportunity. Pete's gone. He's been really aggressive. I've given him the green light. We talk about that a lot.

But the key with that is you've got to let him miss. You can't give the green light only when he's making. You've got to let him go and tell him to attack and mix it up.

The thing about him is he's really good off the dribble, getting to the rim, especially in transition. But he's also a terrific jump shooter. So he can still get 20 even if his three ball's not going, and that's what we need him to do.

Q. Nicholas's injury, is it similar to Tyler's last year?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: No, it's a lot different, actually, because Tyler's was in the joint and Tyler needed surgery, and Nicholas does not. What's funny about it is the recovery time is not that much different. I may have been a little longer for Tyler because he had pins put in, and also he played before he had surgery.

So with Nicholas, they say three to four weeks, and you're hoping it's three, so we'll see.

Q. Where will you miss him the most?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Well, he's a veteran. Even though we have a lot of depth, and I think we have talent, we have size, we don't have a lot of upperclassmen. When you think about it. Dom is an upperclassman. He'll play. He'll play some.

But without Nicholas, if I started Jack, we'd have three freshmen, two sophomores. If I start Ahmad, it's three sophomores, a freshman and a junior. So it's not a really seasoned veteran team at all.

But he's on the floor, it's different. He's a shot maker. He's a savvy guy. He's a versatile player, energy, but he can handle it. He can rebound. He does a lot of everything.

So that's a big loss. But I do think we have others that

can step in. And I expect them to play well. I expect Ahmad to step up, and Jack. Even though he's a freshman, he's really good. I'm really impressed with him. He's been phenomenally consistent from the summer, and Dom will be ready to go. Maishe Dailey is another guy that the last few weeks he's been tremendous. So we'll be fine.

Q. Can you talk about Joe Wieskamp's recruitment? He's been committed for ten years, but when did you first get on him and what do you like about him?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Well, it was different for him because he was in fifth grade, and Patrick was in fourth grade and they were on the same team. So I saw him play 30 times. He had a different body type in those days. He was a thick kid. He was arguably the best player on that team, the same team he's still on.

So Patrick ended up playing with his age group. I don't know if it was the following year or year after. But instead of starting to play a year off, he no longer was Joe's teammate.

So we've watched him play sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade. It was about eighth grade where we figured this kid is the real deal. Probably should offer him. We were really close to doing it then.

Then in his freshman year he started killing it. He averaged 20 points as a freshman. I remember going over to watch him play as a freshman. It was a no-brainer from that point forward. So it was no sense waiting around, oh, let's see what he does here or there. I've seen him play 50 times.

So we put the offer out when he was a freshman, and that's what he wanted to do. He wanted to come, and never wavered. Even though he's on the All-Tournament team, and NBA Top 100 camp, and he's one of the key guys on the adidas circuit, I'm sure he's fielded a lot of phone calls. I'm sure his high school coach did. I know his AAU coach did. And he never wavered.

The thing about him, as talented as he is, he's just a fabulous person from a great family. The kind of guy you can count on. He's smart, he's tough. Incredible double-team guy, he wants to win, but he wants to do it here, and we're thrilled.

Q. C.J. Fredrick, is he going to take that scholarship?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yes, he is.

Q. You mentioned in the release that he was committed before that scholarship was there.

Does that kind of go along with what you're talking about with Joe, the character there that he was willing to commit to you guys?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: The amazing thing with him is he's a really good player and we loved him. We didn't have a scholarship for him for pretty much the duration of his recruitment. We told him we wanted him. We told him one opened up, he'd get it. Joe got the one that was there, and he would get the next one.

He took his time. He visited a number of schools in our conference, and he visited some schools out of our conference. He watched us play on TV, and he came to campus a few times, and just identified this as a place where he wanted to go.

My relationship with his family is a little different. I'm very close with his uncle; I coached him. I have known his dad for years. Played for a great high school coach and a terrific program, terrific AAU situation. Those situations get you ready. He's really a good shooter, good play maker, and good defender. He's got good size, athletic ability.

So we were ecstatic when he said he wanted to come, and even if there wasn't a scholarship. Because it didn't look like there was going to be one until the following year. Then I promised him he would get it then. But it happened earlier, so I called him.

Obviously, that made signing day more of a thrill for him. He is another character guy.

Q. Is it fairly rare for a guy to do that?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: It's never happened in my career. Normally we'd say we'd just walk away. But I have a lot of respect for his father, because his father called me and said -- his father just said to him, Where do you want to go? Forget about everything else. He said, I want to go to Iowa. And he said, Well, then, that's where you're going to go. If I have to pay for a year, I'll pay for it. Hopefully I won't, but doesn't matter. I want you to go where you want to go.

He's going to be good for us.

Q. Is he a little Brady Ellingson-like? Is that a fair comparison?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I think a little bit different. Well, I shouldn't say -- because Brady did play a lot of one in high school. He just kind of brought it down and scored it. So that's not an unfair comparison. But I think this year he's going to play a lot more point for his high school team than he did last year. He sort of has that reputation for being a great shooter, and that's what everybody thinks he is. He just makes shots, and he does, but he's really good off the dribble. He's a terrific rebounder, so he goes in and rebounds. He can

play. You can play three guards with him.

A lot of times guys want to play three guards, but if none of them rebound, you can't play three guards. So, he rebounds, Joe rebounds, Connor rebounds, and you go right on down our roster. Those guys rebound, and I look for that.

I want my point guards rebounding. I don't want guys that think that the rebounding should only be from the front court position, especially when teams are shooting threes against you. You better get those long rebounds. Some of my best rebounders I've ever had have been at the point guard position. One of them is on my staff, Courtney Eldridge. Phenomenal. Just loose ball recoveries, defense. And they're not getting offensive rebounds, of course, because they're getting back. But you have to get those long ones, because if you do, you can just take it. Makes your fast break that much faster when your point guard gets the rebound.

Q. What about Wieskamp? He looks like a kid that's got some holes in his game. Do you see him coming in here and starting right away as a freshman?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I think it's a possibility. He's not a mistake guy. He's got good size. He's a legit 6'6", probably 6'6" plus. But he's got really long arms, and he can jump. So he plays 6'8" to 6'9". If he rips and drives baseline, he's dunking the ball. His stroke is pure; if it's a catch-and-shoot situation you feel like it's going in, but he puts it on the deck, and he gives it up easy, he does not hunt shots.

I've never seen a guy get 25 on fewer shots as often as he does -- or as often as he has, I should say. That's what's beautiful about his game. He'll go 10 for 12 a lot. That's a good thing.

Q. I don't know if you care about the player recruiting rankings, but he is the highest ranked recruit in your history. Do you see him as the top recruit you've had here or potentially?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I think it's safe to say that I don't really care about rankings. I never have. I think it's fun to talk about and some people make their living ranking, so I don't mean to slight those folks, but I have a lot of experience doing this, and so does my staff. They're paid a lot of money to evaluate. I don't need somebody else evaluating. We have to evaluate for ourselves.

We put our eyeballs on them. Can they play in this league or not? Can they fit in our system or not? You know, some guy that works for some internet deal -- no offense, guys -- but, we will do our job and you can evaluate later. If they're any good, you'll write that. If

they're not any good, you'll write that. So let's look at reality, and not what they're projected to be.

That's the same thing with the NBA. You look at guys, and some guys get hyped up and they get drafted high and aren't any good. So ultimately, our success or failure would be dependent upon how good they are and not where they were ranked in high school.

I even talked to guys about that. Because that's important to the kids. They want to know where they're ranked. And they don't like it when they're ranked below guys they know they're better than. We talked about that. You get in those conversations, I can't believe this guy and this guy and this guy. Who cares.

I always tell the story we signed Pat Garrity when I was at Notre Dame, and he was in the top 150. We got killed. He's not a Big East player. You know, who cares where he's ranked in high school. I think he was the 21st pick. I think he made like 35 million in the NBA. Played ten years. Somebody was ranked 19 or 20 in that class, and they weren't the 19th or 20th pick in the draft. So let's focus on what happens later and not what happens in high school.