

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

Saturday, January 28, 2017

Fran McCaffery Postgame Men's Basketball

Iowa - 85, Ohio State - 72

Q. Coach, you've been looking for the 40-minute complete game. Do you feel like you got that tonight?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think in a lot of ways, we did. You know, I think you can look at a lot of things. We, 44 bench points, Dom Uhl, Cordell Pemsil, 11 assists, two turns. There's so many things. Our shooting percentage, our ball movement was better. There's a reason why you make 50 percent. If you move the ball, you're shooting more open shots.

I felt we recognized switching, got the ball inside, got in the bonus early, we ran a little bit better, I thought. I have a lot of respect for this team, for this program, for Thad, and for us to defend the way we did and for us to execute the way we did I think is a big step for our program.

Q. When you look at Brady, the way he was able to shoot and with the confidence and even when he missed one came right back and hit another one, that seems to be big for you guys.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think that's who he is. We have consistently tried to get him to be more aggressive offensively. The thing about him is he's a very efficient person in terms of everything that he does. So if he's curl-cutting, if he's running the floor, defensively he's always in the right place, he's always talking, and if he's not open, he's not going to shoot the ball. He's going to move it on because he knows we need to move the ball side to side.

He really made a concerted effort tonight, starting with the first one he made. He came right off, bang, and kind of set the tone that that's what he was going to do tonight. I would like to see him be like that on a regular basis, just be aggressive and look for his shot. It's okay if you miss a couple but keep attacking.

Q. Early in the second half, I think it was an eight-, nine-point game, Kriener twice got offensive rebounds that led to Brady threes. Those are little plays that the winning team has to have?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He consistently does that. You



forget just how long he is. You know, there was a play in the second half where he didn't get out to the corner, Williams hits a three -- I can't remember if it was Williams or Loving, then they swung it back again, and they went back to it, and he was there.

So you want to see guys figure it out on the fly, okay. Yeah, I know I should have been there, I didn't get there, and they made it. Okay, the next time, I won't let that happen. He didn't need me or any other coach to say anything. He figured out -- they have to fail a little bit sometimes to figure out what we're telling them, and I think that's what you saw. You saw incredible activity level by him.

Tyler Cook struggled a little bit in the first half, was great in the second half, really wanted the ball, and we got him the ball. And so you try to scheme your defense, we've got all these different people scoring, makes it difficult, and that's what you want. But it only works if you're moving the ball and you're sharing the ball and you put the team first, and that's what this group does.

Q. When you win a game like this without your star player, what can that do for the confidence of all the other players?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think it's sort of immeasurable. You look at even Isaiah Moss, gets two quick ones, so Brady is outstanding. Well, he was great in the second half, Isaiah was. And what you're seeing -- I should say what you saw was just a lot more aggressiveness from other people, and that's what I want them to be. I want them to be aggressive.

Q. These freshmen, it strikes me that there's no lack of confidence and there's not much hesitation from these guys. Is this unusual from a freshman group, and is this something you recruit?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I do think it is unusual for a group of freshmen. I think that's a fair statement. We've all seen freshmen that sort of make that seamless transition from high school to college, they just do the same things that they did when they were in high school, shoot the ball late, I want the ball, I'm going to make free throws. But to have a group that collectively is that way I think is special, and I would like to think that we recruit that kind of person. I mean, we try to make that part of the evaluation process.

Obviously this is a different level. It's a different world. But have they shown the ability to make big shots late? Well, anybody -- some of you guys in this room have watched Bohannon, but he's been doing that a long time, so you're not surprised by that. Tyler Cook's team won the state championship. He's done that. Kriener, he did it in AAU, he did it for his high school team, they went to him. You go right on down the line. Cordell did the same thing, they won the state championship, then they lost in the final. He played extremely well in those games. You go to Des Moines as a high school player in this state, it's a different world than the regular-season games.

All those guys have done it. Isaiah Moss played for Simeon. That's what they're used to. We do try to recruit that, but you can't always get it right.

Q. What prompted your decision ultimately to sit Peter tonight?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it was really more the medical personnel. I mean, like I said to you yesterday, it wasn't my decision. It's not my decision to play him, it's not my decision not to play him. It's the medical staff saying, look, let's shut him down. He was good with it. I think he feels better about it, and I'm going to support Pete and I'm going to support my medical staff.

Q. Do you think he could be back soon or will you let him sit for a little while?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I really honestly think we have to go day by day with it. I think the plan is it will go for a little while, but it's really going to be a function of how much progress does he make.

Q. How do you sustain what you saw from the guys tonight? I felt like they were a little looser, weren't thinking as hard about everything they were doing.

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think that's a good point. We try to get them to have fun, you know, and it can be very businesslike when you get into conference play and you're dealing with scouting reports and you're dealing with the road, and there's a lot of stress because you've got a group of kids that want to do what you ask them to do. None of those guys are fighting us. They want to be successful. They want to make the right decision. They want to be a good teammate. And sometimes it doesn't come together. We've had a couple of those games on the road where it didn't come together.

And so that creates stress, and then you forget to enjoy why you're here. I mean, a lot of high school players would love to play in this type of atmosphere, in this league, on national TV on a regular basis. And so what we try to do was get them to say, hey, guys, this

has to be fun. Yeah, it's work. Yeah, we're going to grind. But go have fun, and I thought the crowd was spectacular tonight and really helped our energy level throughout the game.

And I think you're right, and hopefully that will continue. Now, the key for that is doing it on the road. That's the next step for our team.

Q. When you look at what Kriener has been able to do, and almost the dangers of trying to predict trajectories of players when you have so many young players and some of them are better early and others take more time to develop but then here you are midway through the Big Ten season and you've got a guy 14-7, misses only one shot, how does that speak for your patience, that you're able to let him kind of play?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it speaks more to his character than it does my patience, because in all honesty he should have been playing earlier, he was just behind some guys that I felt I needed to get them going, and a lot of guys, they don't handle that well. They shut down, I want to transfer, Coach is crazy. He just kept coming after it every day, and he made me play him. I think -- I hope he's as proud of himself as I am of him for doing that. You watch him play, he doesn't make many mistakes, and he's also having fun out there. So that's a great feeling for a coach.

Q. Pete was very engaged in the game, encouraged his teammates during timeouts and on the bench. Is that a sign of the leadership skills he's developed in his time in the program?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he promised me he would do that, and it's not only what he did -- because some guys will do it when everybody is watching. He did it yesterday when nobody was watching, and he did it in the locker room when there was nobody there. So I think that's a good sign. I'm really proud of him there.

Q. Talk about putting Nicholas and Ahmad in the starting lineup.

FRAN McCAFFERY: I thought those guys were terrific. But we kind of have that team where we're just going to keep juggling. A lot of guys are producing, and they're giving us energy and effort, and they're executing. I think you saw a team tonight that didn't make a ton of mistakes. I really only got upset one time, and that was when we fouled 80 feet from the basket. And that's a harm because they're just battling, but we don't need the clock to stop and they score points. If they're going to score points, we need the clock to keep going, and they have to score over somebody. So that's a teaching moment.

Q. Obviously you're not better without Peter, but

with the offensive flow, how do you get it to look like it did tonight when he comes back in and the guys aren't thinking about getting it to him every possession?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I just think you have a team of individuals now that are supremely confident, and they'll absorb him well. They respect who he is, what he does, and I think he respects who they are and what they do. He'll come back in and he'll move it. I think he's done a pretty good job of trying to be a screener and trying to move the ball and be unselfish, and there's times when he's just got to do what he does and get buckets and get them in bunches, and that's what the good teams have. Other people step up, and then sometimes he'll go off, and that's what we need.