

# University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

Sunday, March 5, 2017

## Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball

Iowa - 90, Penn State - 79

**Q. It was Senior Day. Your seniors made a big contribution. You also had five guys score in double figures. What does that say about the way this team is playing right now?**

COACH McCAFFERY: It says we're moving the ball, sharing the ball. 24 assists on 31 field goals, that's how to do it. That's how you get five guys in double figures.

They're a long, active, defensive team. What you have to be able to do is score in transition, get the ball moving side to side, then make good decisions.

We had a few too many turnovers down the stretch trying to milk clock, then do something that's not as easy as it looks sometimes.

Just really proud of how we're sharing the ball.

**Q. Pete called Nicholas the heart of this team. Is that a fair assessment?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think so. I mean, he's one of the best players in the league, without question. He just keeps getting better. He impacts the game when we put him in. He settles everybody down. He helps you on the glass, helps you defensively, helps you against the press, from three-point range, offensive rebound putbacks, deflections. He's everywhere and he's really smart.

It's a very mature thing for Pete to say.

**Q. Your bench outscored their bench 42-14...**

COACH McCAFFERY: We play a lot of guys. Pat doesn't play as many guys typically. He rides those starters. So it's a different team that they have than we have right now.

He's trying to get those young guys experience. But I'm going to use my bench because I trust those guys. When you do that, they start getting confidence, they trust themselves.

**Q. Dale at the start, he made that first three. How**



**cool was that for you to see?**

COACH McCAFFERY: That was an unbelievable feeling for me to see. I just knew he was going to make one. I mean, he's just too good a shooter. I thought he was going to make the last one, I really did. He shot it from, like, 40 feet (smiling).

He was dying to shoot that last one, too, with six seconds. But that's not who we are.

**Q. This will be your seventh Big Ten tournament. You know what you are going to be bringing in March. The way you are playing, does this feel like a team that can make a run?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think so. I mean, a couple years ago we won six in a row. We were 6-6, ended up 12-6. I thought we were poised at that point.

The thing about conference tournament play, I've obviously played in a number of them, everything's different. You look at the teams in our league. It looks like we're going to play either Indiana or Nebraska, two really good teams. We were in overtime and double overtime with both of them.

So no matter who you play, you better be ready. You know anybody that you play could beat you, and anybody you play you could beat. That's what makes tournament play so much fun sometimes.

**Q. Realizing you still have games left, how will you put this season in context for Jok?**

COACH McCAFFERY: How would I put in season in context? I mean, I got a lot of seasons to think about when I do that.

**Q. What he's done this year.**

COACH McCAFFERY: What he's done?

Well, I would say this. With all due respect to what he's done, I think he did what I expected him to do and what he expected to do. When he decided to come back, I told him, I said, You're going to lead the Big Ten in scoring. That's the plan.

He said, Absolutely.

You don't look at him and say, Okay, there's a guy who is hunting shots. There's a guy whose only purpose in

life is to lead the Big Ten in scoring.

He moves the ball. He understands how to hit the guy on the pick'n roll. He understands how to screen. He understands that he's got to get on the glass if we're going to play three guards. Then he's got to lead a young team.

It was important for him, I think, early not to get frustrated. He goes for 42 in Florida. We get beat. He could have started pointing fingers, blaming me, blaming his teammates. He just hung in there with them and helped them.

I couldn't be more proud of that type of leadership and maturity.

**Q. I know you wouldn't put a number on it before the season, but you get to the finish line in the regular season, 18-13, 10-8 in the Big Ten, has that been a successful season, and why?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, very successful.

**Q. What would you say you're most proud of with this team?**

COACH McCAFFERY: How they grew up and how they stayed together. We had some tough moments. We didn't play well early in Florida. We didn't play well when we came back from Florida. Tyler Cook gets hurt. We had a number of opportunities.

We had a three-game losing streak. Started with a very difficult double overtime loss. We lost some games. We were 3-5. Won three in a row to get 6-5. Every time there was adversity, we met that challenge.

**Q. What was the most important thing this team had to do?**

COACH McCAFFERY: We had to be better defensively. When you look at those tapes early, our offense wasn't that bad. I mean, it wasn't as good as it is now. It wasn't what it needed to be. But I said this a number of times. We score 92 and lose, we score 89 and lose. That's your defense.

That had to get better. It's gotten better.

**Q. I know you don't pay much attention to the bubble talk. Do you feel this team has put together an NCAA tournament résumé?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I do. I think we deserve to be in. But I think what you have to do is not focus on thinking about it and talking about it.

We can do what we have to do to get in. We got to win the next game. Then we got to win the game after that. Got to win the game after that. If you win the one after

that, you're automatically in, so...

Just take 'em one at a time, respect our next opponent.

**Q. How satisfying is it to see the hard work turn into this great stretch at the end of the year?**

COACH McCAFFERY: It's a tremendous feeling. I know how hard I've worked. But my staff has really worked. These kids have really put the time in. You would expect that, I suppose.

To a man, they come early. They watch film. They stay positive. We stay positive with them. We just kept teaching. They just kept getting better.

What ends up happening is you have a little more success, then you have a little more confidence, a little more success, a little more confidence. Then you're doing things that you weren't doing a month ago. Then everybody is doing things they weren't doing a month ago. Now you're in a position to beat really good teams.

The teams that we've beaten are really good.

**Q. Is it fair to say this is one of your more gratifying seasons of coaching?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I would say it is. There's been a number that I would go back and say, Wow, that was pretty incredible.

I remember my senior year in college. We were 3-0. We lost nine in a row. Then we won 14 in a row. We go to the NCAA tournament. That was about as unique an experience as you could ever have. That was my last playing experience.

So I always talk about it. I never get too high. We beat Stanford in their tournament, won it, proceed to lose nine in a row. At a low point, we lose to Yale and Brown in an Ivy League weekend, Penn. We win 14 in a row, beat Temple, go to the NCAA tournament.

I know it can happen. So I always stay confident and positive with my guys. I don't ever let them get too down, but don't ever let them get away from themselves too early.

It would have been easy after the win at Wisconsin, the way we won, to be a little fat-headed today. That was not an easy game for our guys today. I think that's what makes me so proud right now.

**Q. Pete didn't have much the first half with those fouls. Start of the second half, were you trying to run stuff to get him going?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah. We wanted to go to him

early in the first half. He got the foul right away, then got the other one, got tangled up.

I really struggled with it. We've talked about it before. I really thought about putting him back in about seven minutes to go in the first half. I didn't want him to be handcuffed in the second half. I wanted him to be able to get buckets, play his game.

He said yesterday, I'm back, I'm ready.

Thank you.