

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



So he'll do the same today and tomorrow and try to figure out if he can go Thursday.

Q. You go from Purdue to Northwestern to Maryland, three really different styles. What's the message to your guys about how they've got to prepare for Maryland?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think the first thing is we have to be better at what we're doing, and then we shift to Maryland, because you're right, they're different, dramatically, than the previous two teams we've played, but that's not uncommon in our league.

They have good guard play right now, great quickness. The young guys are playing well. Trimble is playing really well. Dodd is back. He helps. Cekovsky will help whenever he comes back. But that gives them two seven-footers that changes the dimension of what they do.

But they've got a lot of weapons, and Mark does a good job with their offense at getting guys shots. So we've got to be ready.

Q. You have a history with Kevin Huerter. Talk about him as a player.

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's a very good player. The thing that has been impressive to anybody that's watched them this year is that he doesn't rush. He plays at his pace, and he really understands how to play, fits very well with their team. But he's the kind of player that would fit with any team. If you wanted him to shoot more and score more, he would do that. If you wanted him to play the point, he could do that. He's just a versatile guy.

Q. You have the youngest starting lineup in I guess the program's history; given that, is it almost a situation where you have to focus more on proving your own team than worrying about the opponent?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think that's a fair statement. Yeah, I do.

Q. Dom Uhl, is he going to practice today?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's going to try to go today. We didn't practice yesterday, so he's going to try to practice today. It's funny, he practiced on Saturday, and that's probably when he knew he couldn't go.

Q. What does that do to your rotation? Is that more chance for Ryan?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, essentially. I mean, he's going to play anyway. He deserves to play.

Q. The ability to make that medium-range jumper, is that something he's had since he's been here?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he can make the three, too. I mean, he's a shooter -- he's a good shooter with great confidence in his ability to shoot the ball. He's going to keep shooting the ball. If he's open, he shoots it. If he's got an opportunity to drive it, he'll drive it. He doesn't do anything crazy. He doesn't put his head down and try to drive through packs of people and charge. If there's room, he goes. If there's not, he moves it on, he screens and rolls, and he's active, and he's tough.

Q. You weren't planning to redshirt any of these guys anyway, but did you see this kind of contribution coming from your freshman group?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I did. You know, especially with him, because he does have that versatility that you're looking for. You couple that with the physicality that he plays with, you need that in this league. You look and say, we've got Cordell and we've got Tyler Cook and we still have Ahmad and Dom Uhl. We're okay, but remember, he's got a 7'3" wingspan. He's bigger, and they're going to probably start a seven-footer. We played a couple big guys last week. Pardon is big. Everybody has got big guys. You need that kind of length.

Q. How big is the extra day off for your team this week? Were they a little fatigued on Sunday?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We certainly played that way. We bussed down, we bussed back, we got home late, the ice storm and all that, we got back really late. So yesterday's day off was really critical for us, especially with a Thursday game. We can go today and tomorrow.

Q. Your guard group right now, how are they playing overall?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Playing great. Obviously didn't play well in the last game as a group, but those three

guys have performed at a very high level.

Q. With Pete dealing with any kind of lingering injuries, what do you need from them more than what they've already offered?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You need them to do what they've been doing: Score the ball, don't turn it over, defend, and be somebody that the other team has to be concerned about because they're going to play Pete -- everybody plays him the same way. They top block him and get physical with him and rotate guys on him. So other people have to just step up.

Q. Does that take a toll on Pete?

FRAN McCAFFERY: The reality is this: they did it to Gatens, they did it to Marble. Everybody does it to the other team's best player. That's what happens. He's no different than anybody else. He's a tough guy. I'm not worried about that. He's had some injuries, and they have lingered, you're right. But he's as tough a guy as there is playing through that stuff. I would have put him back in. We got down by a certain number of points, at that point I wasn't putting him back in. If that game was in the balance, he was going back in. He was good to go.

Q. I feel like he took that personal, that loss. Is that just from him being a leader?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I just think he's a competitor. Obviously he does consider himself the leader of this team, but any time he plays poorly, he takes it personal, and that's what the great ones do. They should. I never want them to feel blame. I'm not going to blame them. I don't want anybody else to blame them. And at some point you don't want them to blame themselves too much because sometimes they can be the biggest problem you have is they're too tough on themselves. But to be upset about a loss and feel responsible and want to make sure it doesn't happen again, that's what you want.

Q. Do you think your players believe they can win big games with Pete struggling?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I do, yeah.

Q. With Ryan adding what he's added, is it going to be a night-to-night thing on who plays in the front court?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, they're all going to play, and it will be a night-to-night thing as to how much they play.

Q. They've won some big games in this building. Do they seem a little looser playing here at home or how would you describe it?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think everybody plays better at home. I don't think it's anything more than that. The

numbers bear that out. Some teams have a particular resiliency on the road. I think that's sometimes more interesting to look at, boy, that's a really good road team. We've had some good road teams here, and we've played well at home. Our best wins have been at home, obviously. So hopefully we'll play well again.

Q. Is it easier shooting at a basket you're familiar with?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, familiarity with your pregame routine, the baskets, the floor, the ball. As you know, the ball changes, so that affects people sometimes. They're all pretty much the same, but just every little thing adds up.

Q. What's it like to play in a league that's got balance, where there's not much of a difference between the perceived best teams and the perceived worst teams?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's great for the league. I think it speaks to who we are as a conference. In theory that's how it should be. I mean, everybody pays their coaches the best money, they have practice facilities, they have nutritionists and charter planes and everybody should be good. Everybody should aspire to be good, and that's what our league does. Some leagues that's not the case. The teams at the top spend a lot more money than the teams at the bottom, and that's why it never changes. That's not the case in our league.

Q. What's the biggest challenge with trying to keep Trimble off the line?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's hard to keep him out of the lane because that's where he gets fouled. He gets fouled when he gets in the lane, so you've got to do the best you can. Everybody tries it. He's got an incredible burst. He's got the ability to play upright and still go by you, which is rare, so you'd think he's not going to go and then he goes, and that will draw some fouls. You've just got to try to tall up as best you can and keep your hands off his hip, you know, chop down, things like that.

Q. Is that where Moss can help you quite a bit?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, Moss could. Everybody is going to have to play him the same way. A lot of times it's whoever the ball screener's defender is has to be able to move his feet and do that.

Q. Do you have an idea yet on a match-up for him because he's played on and off the ball?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he's playing off the ball to start now, so we probably start either Pete or Isaiah on him.

Q. They're playing a freshman point guard this

year; what have you seen from Cowan?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He is also bullet quick and crafty. So now you have two guys that are coming at you 100 miles an hour getting in the lane, and the thing about it is they're not just fast guys. They can score and they can shoot, so you've got to pick them up early. You can't just keep backing up because they'll make you pay for that. But the other thing is they both get rid of the ball. A lot of those guys, they hold onto it forever and they don't make anybody else better. These two guys do that. They get rid of it, and they find Kevin Huerter and they find Dodd at the rim with a lob. They've got multiple people they can throw the ball to.

Q. Dale back at practice this week?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think Dale is going to practice today, yeah.

Q. Is he available Thursday then?

FRAN McCAFFERY: If everything goes well, I don't see why not. That is the plan. He was close last weekend. I thought he might give it a go. I almost wish he did because I would have thrown him in there and seen what he could do. You know, the wrist is a funny thing, especially for a shooter. It's got to feel right. He's still working on that range of motion.

Q. Is this his first practice back then today?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he's going to go full today, but he has been at practice the last five weeks doing something. He's there, he runs, and lately he's been shooting on his own. He just hasn't done anything live.

Q. Dom with his thumb, where is he at right now?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We'll find out today. He didn't practice yesterday. He was really sore on Sunday, didn't think he could go, so we'll see if he can obviously get through practice and then see how it feels tomorrow. But he's got to be able to catch the ball and shoot the ball and dribble the ball. He just said he couldn't do that without incredible pain, and that's not going to make him very effective, so to his credit, he goes, I can't really help you.

Q. Is it a bruise?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, it's a deep bruise. It was really swollen on Friday. Saturday, the swelling went down a little bit, but it was still really sore.