

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball



Q. How difficult of a cover is Nate Mason, the way he's played the last few years?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's playing really well. He's explosive. Not a lot of guys can come at you 100 miles an hour and shoot a pull-up three and then go either way. Some guys are right-handed drivers. Some guys only go left. He goes equally well both ways. He's got a pull-up game. He's a veteran. He's been around; playing as well as anybody in our league right now.

Q. How different are they without Lynch?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, they're different, but I think one of the things that's impressed me is Murphy. He's having a spectacular season, Player of the Year kind of numbers. They went small recently, which was effective, but they can still go big with Konaté or Diedhiou. So they've still got some flexibility. But like I said, the space that Murphy has now to go to work, and he just kind of stepped his game up since Lynch has been out.

Q. What's the toughest thing they're going to do to try to stretch your defense?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, they've got a number of different weapons. McBrayer is playing really well. Used to be he was just a driver, and now he's making threes. So that gives them three scorers there. And then Coffey is really good. When he was out, that was harder for them. But he's a versatile 6'7", 6'8" driver, shooter, so that gives them four weapons, and then there's a variety of other guys, Harris, Washington, et cetera, Hurt. Those guys are all good players with the two big guys, and Fitzgerald is a transfer who's had an opportunity to play more now that Lynch is gone.

They've had a chance to sort of adjust to him not being there, and they're getting productivity from a lot of different people.

Q. Jordan Bohannon's numbers have kind of spiked statistically lately. Is it just taking him a lot to get used to being the focus of attention sometimes?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think he's been great all year. I tried not to overuse him early in the season, and his assist-turnover numbers, his 3-point numbers, he's

been great. I didn't take him out the other night. That's why the spike in numbers a little bit. If you leave him out there, he's going to score. He's going to make plays. That's what he does.

Q. Are Kriener and Brady going to be available?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Kriener maybe. I don't think Brady, but it hasn't been finalized yet. But Kriener has passed his test, but he is still in concussion protocol. You have got to be a certain amount of time from having a headache. He's close.

Q. When you look the way Jordan has run the offense and now here he's really on track to possibly set Big Ten records for 3-pointers, how remarkable is it for somebody who's not only controlling the tempo of the game but also be able to shoot with that kind of proficiency?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's amazing because you can tell that teams have marked him, and they're trying not to let him do that. The thing that's impressed me, he's got the green light, but he doesn't really hunt shots. He's not selfish at all. He waits and lets it come to him. He moves it. Seven assists, no turns the other night. To me that was as impressive as the six threes he made because they came after him, and I never gave him a rest, and they rotated three guys on him in both halves, and it didn't seem to bother him. So it says a lot about how tough he is.

Q. When you look at your defense, is there anything that you were thinking about changing in the future as far as the way you defend or different ways to defend?

FRAN McCAFFERY: There's only certain ways to defend certain action. You can have a ball screen action, you can switch it, you can ice it, you can trap it, or you can play it traditionally. Then you're dealing with pick-and-roll, roll replace, is there somebody low, whether it's going to be replace, or where they have everybody spaced. You're going to help from the two-man side and rotate. So there's no other way to do it. So you can play zone, you can press more, you can play zone more, you can jump it up, you can play triangle-and-two, box-and-one, that kind of stuff. Stuff doesn't work in our league. There's too many good players. Nobody has a team where there's only two good players on it. Everybody has got a team with nine or ten of them. So you don't really do that. So

we'll continue to mix defenses and try to get better with our recognition. Our recognition has not been good this year. It's not. Our execution of defending certain action, I mean, they're close. They're this close. But if you don't get there and they make a three, okay, it doesn't matter that you're really working and you're trying to get it. You didn't get there, and they made a three. We gave them 11 threes the other night, and you can't do that. So when you've got guys that are really trying, they're really concentrating, they're watching film and they're trying to get better.

Q. Do you think you've got enough guys to stretch the floor outside of Jordan?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I still think we have enough. Baer makes threes. I think we have to get Jack Nunge going from there. I'd like to see Maishe shoot more and his numbers are good. Maishe and Isaiah, their percentages are good. I'd like for them to shoot more.

Q. How do you get Jack going?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, first thing you've got to do is play him more because it's one thing to say -- okay, a couple games ago I only played him in the first half. It's like, well, how is he going to get going? I didn't play him in the second half. So I played him in both halves the other night. I played 22 minutes, missed a couple shots early, hit a couple late, but was in there rebounding the ball. I thought he moved well. He was active. He was where he was supposed to be. He's practiced really well, so I think he learned those minutes. That's when I told him -- he's a good player. I just think we have to be patient with him, keep giving him time. It's not easy to be a 6'11" freshman and play 3, 4, 5 and know all those positions, and he does, so I still he is going to be special.

Q. Are there little things with Jack and Garza that you look for, that you want them to show you and build on, just little things like that, little things that you know will come back a year later and be there?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They're different players. That's one of the reasons we recruited both of them. We thought they complemented each other well. They both can make threes, which is rare that you have a smashmouth 6'11", and another guy who's more of a perimeter 6'11", but they both make threes. With Luka, you want him to do what he does well, and he's got a great low-post game. He's a physical rebounder. He's a physical defender.

Defensively we're throwing a lot at him. Teams have got him all stretched out. It's a little bit different than high school, and that's been an adjustment for him.

With Jack, we give him the freedom to rebound and dribble, release and go, and if you're open, shoot a

three, rip and drive it, shoot a pull-up, attack the basket. Nobody says anything to him like, hey, that's a bad shot, hey, move it on, throw it to J-Bo, throw it to Tyler Cook. They're our two best players. Throw it to them. No. If you're open, you go make a play. You be who you are. That takes time, especially with the defenders that he's going against, the physicality of what they're both seeing, and the size and strength, that's always an adjustment. Even when I was at other levels of Division I, it's even more so in the Big Ten with the athletes that we have.

I think they're getting a lot of valuable experience. I think we're seeing great improvement in both of them, and they're going to keep getting better.

Q. If you look at Jack, his game is a little bit bigger version of Jarrod Uthoff when Jarrod was about his age. Similar type game, tall, can still play the perimeter. Jarrod seemed to be apprehensive at times if he missed a couple shots early, and then when he became aggressive he became one of the best players in the country. Do you see that same type of leap for Jack?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We certainly did. When we recruited him, I saw a lot of similarities, and even at the defensive end, he was a shot blocker. He'd block your shot. Very few guys block the shot of the guy they're guarding; Jarrod did that. Usually you come and block somebody else's shot. The real good shot blockers, that's what they do.

But Jack's length and his ability to kind of go up and block your shot without fouling you is a trait that Jarrod had. Jarrod was probably as good as anybody I've ever seen at that -- and you're right. Jarrod was -- keep in mind, by the time we had him, that was his third year in college, and he was still doing that. There was times I said, Jarrod, why didn't you shoot that, why didn't you attack. We want you to be that guy; go.

And eventually you saw it a little bit that first year, and then the next couple years were really good, too. So he was a different player -- the end result was a completely different player, from a guy that was a little tentative to a guy that's playing in the NBA. I kind of see a lot of similarities there, no question.

Q. What can you do to get more consistency out of Isaiah? Is there anything else you can try?

FRAN McCAFFERY: First and foremost, you've got to stick with him. I don't want to bury him, take him out of the lineup and keep encouraging him to be aggressive at both ends. Get up, be in the passing lane, get a deflection, get a steal, maybe get a run-out, maybe get an easy basket or two. Understand you're one of our double figure scorers so people are going to guard you

a certain way. You've got to move without it, and sometimes you've got to go in and you've got to get rid of it. Sometimes you've got to shoot it. But I don't in any way ever put doubt in his mind as to whether or not I think he can shoot, is that a good shot, don't shoot that one. I want him to continue to be aggressive. I think that's going to be the only way we'll get him out of what he's in right now is to make sure that he knows we haven't given up on him and we have confidence in him and we want him to keep going. We're not trying to pull him back. No, we're trying to get him to go the other way.

Q. Any change in Connor's situation?

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, he's doing some workouts. Still not practicing, but he's doing a lot of running. He's running arena stairs and trying to get his heart rate up, trying to get his legs back.