

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. Coach, can you provide a rundown on Gonzaga's personnel.

COACH MCCAFFERY: They have a really good team. They have a lot of really good players. They have a postgame with Timme. They have depth. They have a tremendous point guard in Jalen Suggs. They have shooters. They have slashers.

Ayayi is really good and Kispert can really shoot it. They have so many good players. They're veteran guys. They lose nothing when they go to the bench. They share it. They play it fast. They move it. There's a reason why they're ranked number one.

Q. Could you talk specifically about Timme and what kind of problems he's going to present for Luka?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Well, he runs. He's like a guard. He's 6'10". But he handles the ball really well. He moves in the post. He makes moves from the perimeter. He's really good at creating angles. And he passes the ball to his teammates. So those guys are a handful.

Q. Your guys have been really excited about this game. They are just pumped about playing this game. How excited are you to see them play against Gonzaga?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Any time you have an opportunity to play a program like that is terrific. You look at the remainder of our schedule, 20 league games after this, but we took care of business in the first six. You have an opportunity on a national stage to play the No. 1 ranked team. A team that has pretty much been up there last decade says a lot about who they have, their coach, Mark Few, their coaching staff.

When you make a decision to play college basketball, you hope for opportunities like this on this kind of stage. And that's what we have. So I'm happy for the guys. And I think they're mature and smart enough to recognize the challenge before us.

Q. I imagine that Luka's seen just about every defensive scheme in the book over the last couple of years. I'm wondering if anything struck you as maybe the most exotic or extreme that people have thrown at him? And then just his ability to deal with everything that gets thrown at him.

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think the important thing for him is he's good on the block but he's not just strictly a low-post player. I think you're right. In the post, he's seen it all.

They crowd him. They beat him up. They front him. They double. They double from various locations. They double on the catch. They double on the bounce. They come late. They come early. So nothing fazes him in that sense. And neither does the physicality, because he's used to that. So he'll keep coming.

But the ability to move him around is what's critical. Play him in the high post. Play him in the low post. Play him at the top of the key. Play him on the wing. You can pretty much put him anywhere.

So, there's a variety of things we can run. But the way he's shooting the three ball, the way he's shooting the pull-up, his ability to make plays for other people is really critical. If you're going to be playing against those kinds of defenses, you've got to be able to do a variety of things and that's what he does.

Q. Fran, you've been able to play your first six games uninterrupted. You got them all in. Do you feel like this team really is in that normal in-season rhythm at this point considering everything that's gone on?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think as normal as it can be. It's still not normal. The buildings are empty. And we haven't played a road game yet or neutral game yet. So I do think the veteran nature of our team has enabled us to be mature enough in what we do off the floor and stay connected and stay together in practice and on the floor because we all want to play. Those kids want to play.

They want opportunities to play North Carolina, Iowa State, Gonzaga. They want those opportunities. And I always say that's what they sign up for when they come here.



Q. With not having any fans, how is the team sort of handling that? Obviously I'm sure they wish they could play the game, a 1 versus 3, with a full arena, how are they going into this game without any fans in attendance?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I don't think they're really thinking about it or paying much attention to it. That's the way the games are going to be this year. Maybe later in the season that will change. But right now it's kind of what we're expecting. It's what we've experienced. Same thing for everybody we play. So I don't think they're thinking much of it. Just getting ready to play a great team and try to do the best we can.

Q. Suggs is being talked about as a potential lottery pick, even a very high lottery pick. What is it from what you've seen of him that separates him from maybe everybody?

COACH MCCAFFERY: You know, he would have been a lottery pick last year if he could have come out of high school. So it's a complete skill set, Mike, that's what it is. He can penetrate, get in the lane, find his teammates. He can play fast, play slow. He defends and he rebounds and can shoot it.

He's really special at delivering the ball at the absolute perfect time, which is a gift. Very much like Jason Kidd, when I saw him in high school.

If you throw it one second later, one second earlier, it's a turnover. And when those guys throw it it's an assist. So you really have to be locked in when he has the ball.

Q. This is your second trip up to the Sanford Pentagon, what do you like about that place, the facility, and just as a basketball arena?

COACH MCCAFFERY: Great arena. Deal with very professional people when you're looking at scheduling. And, when you play a game in Sioux Falls, you deal with Paul Seville. Straight-up guy. Really good folks up there. The atmosphere, if it were different, would be nuts. We all prefer that like we said. But, still, it will be an arena that looks really good on national television and two great teams competing. And we're looking forward to it.

Q. On a similar note, I don't know how many guys, if there are any guys left from the last time you were there, but is the fact you've been here once before, you probably have your routine kind of for everything to do during the day, you have a routine set, does it benefit that you've played here once before and Gonzaga is coming in, it's all new to them?

COACH MCCAFFERY: I don't really think that matters at all, to be honest with you. We're all used to going to different venues. Both teams are veteran clubs. We have a few guys who played up there. I think Luka, Connor, and Jack's freshmen year and Jordan's sophomore season. But it's not that big a deal.

Q. Jalen Suggs had that scary thing back on December 2. Andrew Nembhard took over that game. What does he bring to Gonzaga? Seems like he's a calming force for that team.

COACH MCCAFFERY: The thing I liked about him is he can run it when Suggs is out. But they play well together. He can move off the ball and make plays, make shots. Played in the SEC. Was incredibly successful. Again, it's just a veteran guy that doesn't rattle, makes plays, makes the play that's there. Really talented guy.

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