

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Coach Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Hawkeyes, 105 - Cyclones, 77

Q. Seems like an obvious question. How critical was Jack Nunge's play the first half when Luka went to the bench in foul trouble?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He was awesome, but I have been saying it for four years. The kid is really good.

That's what he does. He makes jumpers, he blocks shots, he's smart, he's in the right place, he rebounds in traffic, he can handle it and pass it.

He's just a terrific player, and we needed him. Luka is in foul trouble. He started the game really well but then he gets in foul trouble. Somebody has got to step up and he sure did.

Q. Any sense that Luka was going to go off like he did? Was he chomping at the bit over there on the bench?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's been shooting it really well. It's not like it's a secret. But we really were looking for him today once he got going.

But the beautiful thing about him is he can score inside, he can score outside, he scores wherever you put him. And our plan was to move him around a little bit and give him that opportunity. A lot of people crowd him inside, so you pop him out and then he can make a move from there or shoot it from there.

Tonight he was on fire. He's got a great stroke and he really works on it. So it's great to see a guy that works that hard have that kind of success.

Q. Did you have any thought of putting him back in in the first half at all?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yes, we did.

Q. Can you share what your thought process was?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, you know, I always want my guys to be able to play without being tentative, you know. And as long as we were doing okay I was going to leave him out a little longer; put him back in if we really have to.

I knew we were getting quality minutes from Keegan and Patrick. Connor was playing really well. Came back and helped us against the pressure.

So I felt like where were okay.

Q. Two games in a row where someone who may not know much about your team would think you're a Garza, Garza, Garza; two games in a row where the other guys have kept the ship afloat and helped you win the game. How satisfying is that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's very satisfying, but that's the way it has to be. You have been doing this a long time. You've got to be able to move the ball and get offense from a variety of places and you've got to be able to play through your best player.

Luka has really become well-equipped to handle whatever they throw at him. He's seen it. He never panics. He gets rid of it. He shoots it outside. He can go one dribble kick. He can make a dribble move to the basket. Go off either shoulder in the post.

But sometimes the most impressive thing, I mean, the offensive rebound put-backs, when you have a good possession, it doesn't go in, they think they got a stop, he gets it, puts it back in. I mean, those things really wear on the other team, and that's what he does.

Q. You went off on your team on the time out with about 12:45 left. I assume it was because of a series of baskets from Iowa State that seemed fairly uncontested. Never minding that, right out of the timeout you get a 30 second call, a 30 second stop, and then Luka goes off. Does that one stop start everything in motion?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It does. You know, we started the second half really well. I think we scored the first seven, maybe the first nine, I can't remember. But we really came out of the locker room in really good shape and started

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quick shooting it a little bit.

We weren't getting our defense put together and they were taking it right through us. You're absolutely right, Mike, that's what they were doing.

You shouldn't be able to drive from beyond the top of the key to the basket against the zone and play the ball up. There are certain things that are not going to be tolerated and shouldn't be tolerated by the coaching staff or the players themselves.

The thing about it is if you get on them about it they recognize. If I get on them about everything every second then I'm nuts and they turn you off. If I get on them when they deserve it and they ratchet up the defense...

But it was also I think our awareness, activity level, and they were really overloading the zone and guys were coming from behind. Got that last basket in the first half.

Luka was really good, not only in terms of recognizing that, but talking it through. The guys in the forward spot don't see what's going on behind them. You got to tell them. Patrick, and whether it's Wiesy on the other side or Connor.

So I thought our activity level at the top against ball screens was really good. So not only did we get that stop you're referring to, which was huge, we got a couple consecutive stops. Now when Luka is on fire we're not trading. We're stop, score, stop, score, stop, score. That's how you extend the lead.

Q. What did you like about what you got out of Joe Toussaint tonight with seven assists?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I thought Joe's activity at the top of the zone and understanding of what was going on behind him was really, really special.

But he's also -- he gets his hands on the ball, he rebounds the ball, and then he pushes the ball. He's smart. He recognized this guy is on fire, so let's get it to him. We can work it, work it, and then get it to him. Get him the ball when he's on fire like that.

That's what the great point guards do, and he was terrific tonight.

Q. I know I've learned from you that every win is hard. What does it mean to you to win three straight against a team like Iowa State? That hasn't happened for a long time in Iowa.

FRAN McCAFFERY: I have a lot of respect for Steve and his program. You know, I been involved in a lot of rivalry games in my career. They all have a different feel to them.

The players know it, the coaches know it, the fans know it. So to be able to do that I think says a lot about our players and their ability to focus and concentrate and kind of put the distractions aside. There are always distractions around rivalry games.

I thought Iowa State played hard. They came and got us. They were pressing up, being physical. So we had to keep our composure, which you have to do. We jump them, they come right back at it; you have to respect that.

And then you have to perform up to your capabilities. So I'm happy for our guys. I want them to enjoy this one and then we got another one on Sunday. Don't have a lot of time.

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