

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. Wonder what you seen from Maryland, and how does the second half they had against Wisconsin really kind of jump out at you?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They competed in that game, played really hard. They were really together. They have I think a very good team. They're different than last year. Obviously they lose Smith and Cowan.

But they have some other guys. Scott has really taken his game to another level. I've always been a big fan of Ayala. I think he's terrific. Wiggins was really good last night. Has always been good, one of the better players in our league last year.

And you add in transfer guys that are playing well; they got a lot of different weapons. They have a lot of the versatility, guys that play multiple positions in 6'7", 6'6", 6'8" range, long, athletic. They got a lot of different guys that can score. Tough team.

Q. Going back to D.C. this week, home of Luka. When you recruited him and gave him that first offer, do you remember the moment when you offered the scholarship, and did you feel at that moment like you were on to something that maybe others weren't?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I felt like he was going to be terrific. We offered him really early in his career. Like we have said a million times, I got to see him early in a couple different locations and it was a no-brainer for me.

And he actually changed his game somewhat. He was always a guy who could play well at the end of the game. He could always stretch the floor and make threes; he was always a physical guy; he was always an incredibly intelligent player.

But he continued to work on his body and his speed and quickness. The stuff he's doing now is fun to watch. You can see it coming.

But when we offered him early, we offered him earlier than

we normally offer people. But to me, I just felt like, Okay, great, we're in there early and going to recruit this kid hard.

But he's going to get a ton of attention. The attention is coming. It's just a matter of him getting out on the circuit, which he did, and of course he had hundreds of offers by the end of it all.

But we were able to get in and develop a relationship with he and his dad and his mom, sister; high school coach we already had a relationship. Sherm and I, knew him and then we had a relationship with the AAU program; really good people.

It all kind of came together, I guess.

Q. Aaron Ulis showed both an ability to get to the basket on the dribble, and then to play really good defense. Are those things you've seen in practice, and is your confidence level increased after that game using him?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I had no hesitation before. We had a nine-man rotation working. It's always difficult when you're a coach and you know you have a guy who is really good and wants to play and deserves to play. You try to find minutes when you can.

The opportunity presented itself on Saturday with Connor going out and Joe getting poked in the eye and CJ getting in foul trouble, and you see what he's capable of doing. That kid is a terrific player. He did things this that game that you would expect him to do.

We had seen it in high school, in practice. He has a great demeanor to play the game. No big deal. Just go out there and do my job. He was terrific and I was happy for him.

Q. Give us an update on Connor. How is the ankle?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's doing pretty well. He probably won't practice today. He'll do some stuff, see how that goes. Hopefully get him back out there tomorrow.

Q. Moving forward for Keegan Murray, do you foresee him having a lot more of a role, I guess, like he did in the last 18 and a half minutes of the Rutgers game?

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FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it all depends. You go game to game. The kid is a terrific player. He's versatile. He'll be out there quite a bit.

Again, depends on the game and who we're playing and what we need on the floor at any particular time. He's proven he's ready to go and he's not going to make any mistakes. He was obviously spectacular on Saturday.

Q. What kind of challenges does Maryland have for you as you get ready to play them on the road?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Very versatile team. A lot of athletes, a lot of length, a lot of different guys that can score. I think they're a tough group. Just like everybody else in our league. Every team is a handful.

Q. Just following up one more time on Luka. Is he like the ultimate example of kind of I guess the self-made man, self-made player that you've seen in coaching?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think there are different ways to define that. Ever since I saw him play he was really good. Supposedly he came a long way from a his freshman year to his sophomore year in high school, but I've never seen the guy play poorly. Never seen him not work as hard as he possibly can every minute of every day in practice or every minute of every game he's played in.

So I'm sure there are a lot of examples of guys that grind and become great. It's been fun to watch him become the national player of the year. I can tell you that. Because he's a guy that you root for when you watch his professionalism in terms of everything that he does, how he lives his life, how he prepares in the weight room, he prepares in practice, how he studies the scouting report, and how he works on his craft.

So he's a great example in a lot of ways.

Q. I was wondering your initial reaction to the NCAA Tournament most likely being held in Indianapolis, and does that give you a little bit more confidence that your players will get to see the season through all the way?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Doesn't give me any more confidence. I was confident before. I think when I heard that decision, in my mind it was already done that's how they were going to do it.

I'm really impressed with Dan Gavitt and his group and how they're putting this thing together. I'm excited for everybody that plays college basketball to have the

opportunity to play in that tournament.

Q. Do you feel for Luka in the fact that here this is his last game in the Washington area and nobody can come see him?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. There would have been a lot of people from his family, from his high school, from his AAU team. But the thing about him, I'm sure he wishes they were there; we all do.

But he just goes about his business. He's not going to worry about it, and when the time comes that they can come, whether it's here or in another arena, they'll be there.

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