

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. When you look at Michigan State, what reasons can you point to they are off to a 2-6 start and how could you guard against complacency? I know they won't have it but curious what your thoughts are.

FRAN McCAFFERY: When you look at them, they have a really good roster. We have the utmost respect for them. They beat us last year. They typically win and compete hard. They are going to defend. They are going to rebound. They just didn't shoot it well the last couple games. I don't think it's something that will continue for them, and they have good shooters. They just didn't shoot it well.

I think our guys are smart enough to understand they are not making as many shots, and I think yesterday's game, I thought Ohio State played really well. Defended well. But they had some clean looks that didn't go in and they missed some free throws. Our guys will be ready.

Q. As you enter a week where you have got such a quick turnaround in between games, I know every coach handles this stuff differently but how do you try to prepare for the one that's right in front of you and also the one right behind it, Ohio State?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We'll just prepare for Michigan State and we'll move on to the next game. Even though it's a short turnaround, we won't change anything there.

Q. The lineup you used with Keegan at the 4 and Connor at the 2, what was the thought behind that and how did you like it?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I thought it was really good. I thought Keegan performed extremely well. He made some mistakes, as you would have expected, but he's a guy that learns quickly. I think it was good for him to be in that role. I thought it was important to bring Jack off the bench. He was spectacular. We've just got to get some other guys some minutes. I thought Tony was great. With CJ out, obviously he became critical but also try to get some minutes for Aaron.

Q. I know we continue to ask you about this, but what's the latest with CJ? Is there a chance that he goes tomorrow?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, there's a chance. We'll know more after today. See how he does today in practice. He's going to try to go a little bit.

Q. Kind of a different question. Obviously couldn't ask you about it on Friday. John Chaney passed away, Philly guy, wonder if you had any memories of John as a coach and guy in Philly?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Tremendous respect for Coach Chaney. Really one of the most respected Philly basketball people, coach, player, because he was a great player, too. People don't remember that. I worked his camp for many years, friends of his. I grew up playing against his son. We were one year apart, so we played a lot together and against each other. And then I played against his Temple teams, and then coached against them in the NCAA tournament when I was at Lehigh in '88. They were ranked No. 1 and we played them at Hartford. But just a guy that I think proved himself as a coach -- he's in the Hall of Fame, but more importantly, was a guy that when times were -- when it was more difficult to speak out, he spoke out, and did it in a way that people would listen and respect, I think because people loved him, and he's usually right.

So our sport will miss John Chaney in a big way.

Q. You talked about Jack and the way he played Friday night. How important was that for him to have a game like that, because it seemed like he gave you a lot of big minutes especially there in the second half.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Especially with Luka on the bench, he was a horse in the middle defensively. He's really good defensively, not only in terms of being able to use his length but recognizing what's coming, where to go, where to be, and more importantly, help his teammates with communication.

He's one of those guys, he's always in the right place, and when you have a seven-footer with a 7-3 wing span that's in the right place, he's going to impact the game. He got



some buckets, so he's a guy that can impact the game offensively, as well. As he gets more and more opportunities, he'll start making his three.

Q. You said you won't really start preparing for Ohio State until you've played Michigan State first, but is there anything about Ohio State that's caught your eye to this point, maybe in crossover in film, things like that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I think they have been really impressive. They are consistent. They have got depth. They defend. They move the ball, share the ball. They have got some guys that are really playing well. I mean, EJ is really one of the best players in the country I think, and now they have got CJ back, that's a help. There's a lot of weapons there. Aaron shooting ball, Towns off the bench, Young is terrific, Washington. They have got a lot of weapons.

Q. Philosophical question. Do you go into games with pre-plan substitution patterns, or do you go by feel? Kind of walk me through your thought process as the game goes on with subs.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Sometimes it's dictated by foul trouble. But normally we'll try to gauge, is anybody tired, does anybody need a blow. We try to rest our guys, our starters for stretches in the first half. So we kind of know who six, seven, eight, nine are, but like you say, sometimes the game's different, so you end up going big, going small. Do you bring Jack in for Luka or you bring Jack in to play alongside Luka for a variety of reasons, based on maybe what you're doing defensively or what matchups you want out there.

The guys that have earned the majority of minutes coming off the bench consistently is obviously Keegan Patrick, Jack and Joe Toussaint, and with CJ out, obviously Keegan goes into the starting lineup and those guys are still integral to what we are doing; Tony next with Aaron depending upon what we need.

Q. You mentioned that Michigan State isn't shooting it well. Have you seen any other after-effects from their three-week pause in these last two games?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think you saw it in the Rutgers game, and I thought Rutgers played extremely well, if anybody watched that game. They were really moving and attacking and playing great defense, but Michigan State was not themselves in that game. I think they were closer to themselves yesterday against a really good Ohio State team on the road.

So I think it stands to reason, if you're out that long, Langford was 4-for-15 yesterday, and he was one of the guys that was out. He's a really good player. Who knows what's going to happen the next one, but he's obviously going to be at the top of anybody's scouting report playing Michigan State.

Q. Some of the teams have had pauses, I think Michigan State still has two games to make up, Michigan has 11, Nebraska 15 games still to play. Do you think the fact that there's only 35 days roughly left of the regular season, do you think it's possible that the Big Ten will want to use its championship week maybe as a make-up week instead or do you think that there's a real commitment to putting forth the Big Ten Tournament this year?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think we'll have the Big Ten tournament.

Q. So you think there could be a stagger in the number of regular-season games and that's probably --

FRAN McCAFFERY: You're just going to have to squeeze them in I think.

Q. This game was originally slotted to take place in January. Michigan State has not played a ton since then but is there anything you've learned about your team or the Spartans since then or is the scouting report looking similar to January?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's fairly similar. Both teams have qualities that won't change, not only from week-to-week but year-to-year, focusing on personnel. They have most of their guys ready to go. Brown didn't play in the last game, so don't know what his status will be. CJ didn't play in the last game. But other than that, it's the same guys. Same coach. Same philosophy. So it won't change that much.

Q. How do you do postgame messaging? Do you try to get in their ears right after a game when things are fresh? Do you wait a day so that you've had time to think things over and so have they, and what was the takeaway from Friday night?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Friday night after the game, Friday night or any other night for me, it's going to be pretty matter of fact. We will not accentuate the negative or accentuate the positive. We will discuss both as it relates to what we did as a team; what individuals did. It's not going to be in any way to make anybody feel bad.

Like for example, with Jack, the last rebound, it wasn't all



his fault. But we wouldn't have been in the position we were in if it wasn't for Jack Nunge, and he thought he played great. And I told him that. That said, get that last rebound. Bohannon and Wieskamp were right in there, too. Those guys have to get that rebound.

Now, they might have fouled us with four seconds to go and down three, who knows. So you point out what they could have done or maybe something they didn't think about. You hold them accountable. But I think to further answer your question, I think you're right in the sense that it makes more sense to wait a day, not only because there's emotion involved right after the game, but we've all had a chance to go back and review the film and kind of point out, okay, we were expecting to do this or defensively we were trying to do that, and we didn't get that done. Show it to them. Okay, why didn't we get it done. How can we be better.

But at the end of the day, you're always going to hold them accountable for the information that was in the scouting report that they may or may not have carried out, and they have to know and understand that; that that has to be done. But again, it's a fluid game. A lot of things happen. Guys make mistakes and you want them to be able to play through them and not let it linger, so you can't be harping and micromanaging every possession. You have to understand a little bit of the big picture, too, and you have to let them play. There's a fine line there. So I think the messaging is always going to be, how do we get better.

Q. Is it easier to hold a veteran team like you have accountable in situations like this because they have been around and kind of know what to expect?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it is, and I also think it's easier for them to hold each other accountable because I think that's important, as well. So I'm not the only one that's feeding them information. They have to, not only hold each other accountable after the game but during the game, as the game is progressing; and somebody doesn't run back on defense or somebody doesn't recognize the intricacies of the scouting report and makes a mistake or two, because we all know that one mistake can't become three or four.

So I think our guys, they know our system well enough. They know me well enough that I am going to hold them accountable and it's going to be done in a professional way.

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