

# University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

## Coach Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball Press Conference



### Q. What has this week been like?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, we had practice, gave them a little bit more time yesterday, but most of the guys were in shooting anyway. Just get ready for the next one. We've done this before.

Last year we couldn't go to Ohio State. The year before we had Nebraska. They got hit with COVID. No big deal.

### Q. How is Patrick doing?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's doing a lot better. He practiced the other day, looked good. He'll practice today. See if he's ready to go.

### Q. Is he getting anxious to get back out there?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think he is. The first step was obviously to get back for practice and see where he was physically in terms of his conditioning. He was pretty good. So that was good to see.

### Q. This Ohio State team has lost five straight, but they have scorers, they have a lot of physicality. What stands out about this squad?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They're a really impressive team. You think about it, they're sitting there at 10-3, lost at Duke and in overtime to North Carolina and to a ranked San Diego State team, and then they lost five games by a total of 19 points. Tough call against Minnesota. They have a lot of different weapons. Zed was hurt for a minute there and was on a little minutes restriction, but he's back. He's one of the better big guys in our league. Sensabaugh is probably one of the best freshmen in the country. They get really good play out of the point guard position. McNeil has been a big-time acquisition; Sueing is back. He's a terrific player. Didn't play last year because he was hurt. They have some grad transfers that are really effective, so it's an old team with a couple of young guys that are really playing well.

### Q. Is what's happened to them an example of how tough this league is, what can happen?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, we could be undefeated or we could have five losses. Overtime win, overtime loss, they could go either way. Every team is in the same boat. A lot of these games are going to come down to two or three possessions because everybody is good.

You hope to be on the winning side of those close games, but every team has got veterans. Every team has scorers, as you pointed out. You have to take care of the ball, most importantly, and then you have to rebound. Sometimes you have nights where you can't make a shot. You're going to lose those. We couldn't make a shot against Nebraska; give them credit for that, but shot the ball very poorly, and it's going to be hard to win.

### Q. Kris is on pace to be your third different player who's averaged 20 in a season. There aren't that many guys who average 20 in a season. What has separated these three guys from the pack?

FRAN McCAFFERY: All three of them are versatile in their own way. You look at Luka and you say he's a low post guy, but not really, he shot 44 percent from three, he made every elbow jumper, every baseline jumper. He can make a 12-foot jump hook look like a two-foot jump hook. Keegan was a coast-to-coast guy, really difficult matchup, phenomenal coming off screens.

I think you're seeing Kris the same way. Makes threes, drives the ball, offensive rebound put-backs, scores from different locations on the floor, so you can't really scheme your defense because they're never in one place.

Being able to go off the bounce and hit threes is really effective. We're going to get out and run, so we're going to encourage our guys to be aggressive offensively.

I think Marble was really close. I think he was like at 19 something. When I moved him back to the 2, I told him, I want you to lead the Big Ten in scoring, and he came in second that year.

So we're going to get our guys shots. We're going to run stuff for them, and we're going to get them out in the open floor where they can do some damage.



**Q. What is the core of your offensive philosophy because it seems like it's been consistent over the years, but drilled down, how do you look at offense? What is it that you want to do and why?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, we want to get it and go and attack, and then we want to move it and share it, and that seems real simple. We've had great character guys. You look at over the years, it's one thing for the coach to say, I want you to share the ball, but everybody has to decide they want to share the ball. You have to recognize, hey, wait a minute, we've got Luka Garza, we need to throw it to him. We need to throw it to Wieskamp.

That's where Bohannon was so great because there's a guy that scored over 2,000, but he was not a guy who was hunting shots. Now, he could. He could make 10 threes in a game, which he did, but he also has a school record for assists, and he knew when to throw the ball to Luka, when to throw the ball to Wieskamp.

Connor is the same way. Bryce Cartwright was the same way. Mike Gesell and Anthony Clemmons were the same way. Peter Jok led the Big Ten in scoring. He was probably up right around 19, as well. You had to load Pete up when he's hot. You have to recognize that.

So we have a team of people who buy in to winning.

Keegan Murray, he didn't set out to lead the league in scoring or lead the nation in scoring. He was leading the nation at one point. He just was trying to score and rebound and help us win. Then ultimately sometimes it ends up that way where you get all the recognition like he and Luka did, and I'm happy for Kris.

**Q. Before you were a coach, obviously you were a player. How much of your style as a coach dates back to what you liked to do as a player?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think that's a good point because when I signed out of high school with Wake Forest, we ran on makes and misses. We pushed it hard. We were shooting it quick. That was before the 3-point line and the clock, so teams were playing a lot slower in those days.

Then when I transferred to Penn, we did the same thing. We used to run secondary break in those days, so your primary break went into secondary break before you did anything else.

Initially in my coaching career, that's how we played. I worked for Tom Schneider, was an offensive guy; Craig Littlepage, who was also a brilliant guy offensively; and

then Digger Phelps was a push it, attack; coach MacLeod was a little more run sets, but he was not opposed to running. We had Elmer Bennett and Damon Sweet and those guys, and they ran and LaPhonso Ellis, so who's going to take advantage of that.

So you're right, it's always been kind of how I was raised growing up in Philadelphia, playing in the city. We were always trying to beat people off the dribble, so it's kind of an attack mentality.

But sometimes you can't play that way because the other team doesn't allow you to play that way. Now you have to be disciplined enough to score later in the clock and to execute your offense later in the clock.

I think that's the balance that you have to find because you can play fast and you can become a turnover team, and we're not turning it over. We're going to get shots up.

**Q. Last year you talked quite a bit about Kris' progression in terms of getting a couple shots and getting his head down a little bit. This year it seems like even the last game he missed a couple if jumpers but you saw him keep attacking, he would get inside buckets, post up. How would you describe the mental progression?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, he's a completely different person. You see him, he shot an air ball and then drills the next one. He's able to get to the next play.

Keegan is one of the best I ever had at doing that. Nothing ever seemed to bother him at all. Kris is just a real conscientious guy, and convinced him, look, I'm not taking you out, I'm not going to get mad at you, just keep firing, keep attacking, and over the course of 40 minutes a lot of good things are going to happen for you and for us.

**Q. Team has won four in a row, and there are some players who have broken out of recent slumps. How would you assess how the team is gelling right now?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, it's been really good with that. I think Sanford is playing the way we all thought he would, the way he thought he would. Been really proud of him. Same thing with Josh Dix. Dasonte has been effective. We've gotten minutes out of Riley Mulvey, and I'm still comfortable with Carter Kingsbury if I have to play another guy.

It would be nice to get Josh Ogundele back. I think he's getting closer, but he's not there yet.

**Q. How do you coach resiliency? It seems like earlier**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**in the season you guys had Kris' injury, you guys have played well in the second half of games. How do you coach resilience?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think you encourage individuals to be confident so that when your opportunity presents itself, not that anybody is hoping somebody gets hurt, but that's what happens through the course of a season. You typically never start the season and everybody plays every minute. Somebody is going to have to have a role that changes.

Look at Connor's minutes and then Kris' minutes when he came back, same thing with Filip. Those guys are heavy minutes guys, but if they're not there, somebody has to step in, and luckily we have some versatility. We don't have a lot of depth in the front court. When Patrick comes back, that will obviously help. I think when Josh comes back, that will obviously help. We're going to try to develop it with Riley.

But we encourage our guys to make plays, and if you do that and you're out there thinking for yourself and not thinking for what the coach wants, your tendency will be to be able to get to the next play if you make a mistake. If you make a mistake, you miss a shot, we don't expect you to be perfect, run back and play defense. Don't hang your head and mope and complain to the official. You just ran back and play defense.

Our guys have bought into that philosophy, and it's really helped them.

**Q. What did you think of the Chris Street documentary?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think pretty much everybody watched it. I certainly did. I'm continually impressed with Matt Engel and the folks at Big Ten Network. I've worked with him over the years for a number of different journey episodes, and I thought it was really well done.

I think in a situation like that, it's very important that you tell the story effectively, and I thought that's what they did. I think that was important to us in our program, but it was important to the Street family that the story be told properly, and I thought it was.

I'm not surprised. Everything that I've done with those guys has been incredibly professional, incredibly well-done.

**Q. When does the mechanics of when a game gets canceled, does Chris Collins reach out to you?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: He did, he called me. Chris, I consider him a friend. I've known him a long time. I'm very close with his dad. He's not trying to pull anything. He's like, I'm down six guys. I can't do it. Then it goes to the league. I thought the league did a good job. Brad Taylor stepped in. He's new. This is his first year. These are not easy solutions as you get later on in the season. There's just not many dates left.

I only have a one-day prep and you have a two-day prep and everybody is trying to angle -- you have to figure out where -- you play the game. I think we came up with something good.

But the league is professional with how they talk to everybody, and they're going to do everything they can to make it as fair and equitable as possible. Somebody might have an advantage, shorter prep, longer prep, whatever.

But I pretty much moved on to Ohio State, and Marcus Wilson and Gary Barta were involved in those discussions, and it came out fine.

**Q. A lot of people describe your team as undersized, but you're second in the Big Ten in offensive rebounding. How have you seen your guys buy into rebounding offensively and defensively?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Filip has been really good. You look at his numbers and Kris, they're both very good at it, and then we have Payton -- it's really individuals. I wouldn't say that it's any particular drill that I've come up with that's particularly ingenious. That's an effort thing. Why was Dennis Rodman so good at that? He was 6'8", but so is everybody else in the league. He was special, and he just went for it every time.

Those are opportunities, and Ohio State, Zed Key is really one of the better offensive rebounders, as well.

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