

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Coach Fran McCaffery Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. Fran, can I assume that the media is probably going to make a bigger deal out of you guys facing the No. 1 team than you and your preparation? Does it even come up much?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Really it doesn't. I think at this point, anybody that plays Purdue has tremendous respect for that team and Coach Painter and the players they have. Everybody knows who they have. Tough place to play; everybody knows that, too.

We're just trying to get ready.

Q. Beyond what Zach Edey has done, which is plenty, what's made them a team that's 22-2?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They're a very connected group. You can see it. You've got two freshman guards that are playing really well, and you have some veterans coming off the bench, accepting their roles and excelling in their roles. You've got a deep team. They're big. They've got a multitude of 3-point shooters. They're not a mistake team. They defend. They've always done that.

It's a team you have to beat.

Q. How much has Edey's game grown just in the last year?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it helps that he's not splitting time. He's more comfortable out there. They've always gone to him. Even when he only played half the game, they would go to him when he was in there. He's become much better at playing in traffic and making plays.

When he first got there, he wasn't very good at that, and now he's passing the ball to cutters, he's skipping opposite, he's going quick, and that makes him that much harder to guard.

Q. How do you beat this team?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You have to make sure that you

defend every possession, don't turn it over and get a good shot opportunity. You can't let them dominate the offensive glass and get second shots. They're really good at that. Not just him; he's No. 1 in the country. But Furst and Gillis and those other guys, Morton and those guys are winning players. They're going to go after it on the glass.

You give them more than one or two shot opportunities, you're going to have a hard time beating them.

Q. With brother duos like Connor and Patrick and previously Keegan and Chris, and soon Payton and Price, how important do you think family is to this basketball program?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, all of those guys have been really good players and really take great pride in wearing that jersey. I'm very proud to have all of them here. I think it says a lot that Price wanted to come, knowing the experience that his brother had. He's been great in all areas, as the other four guys have been.

Just happy to have the opportunity to coach those guys because they're all really good players.

Q. At what point do you sacrifice shooting for size in playing a team like this?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't know that you sacrifice anything at any point in time. You take what's there. You have to be careful; you can sell out on him, and they can make 15 threes on you. You have to be able to guard the paint. You've got to be able to guard the perimeter. You have to be able to guard the drive if you're going to beat this team.

Q. Is Ogundele going to be available to help?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, he will be.

Q. I think it was both games last year against Purdue

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FRAN McCAFFERY: He played really well. Yes, he did. I don't remember the game here, but he was really good there, and he was really good in the tournament.

Q. I know the game, players are a lot younger now, but

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they have two freshmen guards like they do and to sustain it like they do, how unusual is that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, those don't guys don't play like freshmen, so I think it starts there. You're seeing more and more veteran teams now with the transfer portal, but if you have really good freshmen, you play them. They're ready to go. Sometimes they've got guys ahead of them. We have two really good freshman guards, but they've got guys ahead of them, so they're playing, but they're not playing probably as much as they would like. I would like to play them more, but the other guys are playing well.

They lost Thompson and Hunter and Ivey, so there was opportunity there for those guys, and like I said, Jenkins is a 2,000-point scorer and he's content coming off the bench. It's working for them. Those two guys are special.

Q. From what you've seen on him, is there any difference between how Purdue played with Haas and those other bigs as opposed to how they play now, or is it kind of the same deal?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's kind of the same. The difference was they had two bigs then, and then they had two bigs last couple years. They had the other kid, the kid Haarms, and he wasn't -- he didn't want to split time, so he transferred. So they brought Edey in, so they had Edey and Trevion, and they were a handful because they both played 20 minutes, and they both were fresh the whole time.

So I think Zach's stamina, knowing he was going to play 30-plus minutes, I think that he's in a good place there. But it's also more comfortable, like I said.

Q. We've talked a lot over the years about you being able to coach Connor and Patrick, but coming in February now, this is going to be Connor's kind of last go-around. Are you so locked into the season that you can't really appreciate some of the moments you have, or are you still able to embrace --

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's something that is not easy at times because you're just locked in to try to win the next game, but I've said very candidly, I've enjoyed the ride with both of them. Having the experience every day, to see them and coach them, it's not always a bowl of cherries. Some days you lose; some days you don't play well; some days the team plays well, they don't play well or vice versa. But that's what the journey is. You go through it together, and you grow and get better.

But just to experience it all together is very special to me, and I think to them.

Q. Going back to the Big Ten championship last year, creating more scoring opportunities by racking up a lot of steals was a big part of that game.

Coaching-wise, how do you teach that and implement that to your players?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We're pretty much committed to pressing every game. We had good success with it at times, and sometimes we haven't, as you've seen. We had good success with it down there last year, down 19, came back, got some turnovers in the tournament. You don't know what this group is going to do. They're a pretty good ball handling team.

But we'll still press up and see what happens and try to make sure when we do, we don't expose the back side and give up easy baskets or easy transition threes.

Q. What do you ask Filip to do in this game, and is there anything that you ask him not to do?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I just want him to be who he is. He's going to work hard defensively, he's going to run the floor, he's going to be aggressive offensively, active and smart.

I think just make intelligent decisions.

He's a hard guy to cover one-on-one, so we'll try to give him as much help as we can.

Q. Emotion during the course of a game is kind of interesting; sometimes it can help fuel a player and sometimes it can get them off course. How do you as a coach approach guys flexing after a made basket, or how do you approach them managing their emotions and how much freedom do you want to give them during the course of a game?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I pretty much let them express themselves. IWe can all agree there might come a point in time where somebody goes overboard. I haven't seen our guys do that, but if they did, I would be quick to step up and say, okay, that's enough.

There's always that act like you've done it before kind of mentality, but this game is about emotion. You look at a guy like Tony Perkins, he plays with emotion, he plays with fire, and why would you ever want to stop that from happening. He is who he is. I want him to play with that kind of passion. He's not the only one, but he's a good example of it.

I let those guys go as long as they're somewhat respectful. You don't want the taunting, tease, you dunk on a guy,

then you want to start running your mouth. We can't have that.

Q. There's a stat that's been floating around that's just been -- people scratch their heads. You're 7-0 against the winning teams in the conference and 0-5 against the others. Does it mean anything?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't think so. There's a lot of numbers you could look at. How many threes did you make, did you turn it over, did your key guys get in foul trouble, was somebody out. There's any number of reasons you could look at.

But what probably stands out to me the most with that number is it shows you how good the other teams are. They might have losing records right now, but they're capable of beating anybody. We have some good teams in this league top to bottom, and especially if you're on the road.

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