

11/10/2010: Iowa men's basketball notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery discusses the Hawkeyes' season opener this weekend against South Dakota State with the media during a press conference at Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2010.

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HawkeyeDrive.com

IOWA CITY, Iowa – When the Fran McCaffery era of Iowa basketball officially begins at Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Nov. 14 in a game against South Dakota State, the Hawkeyes will be looking to start the season fast, something they failed to do last year during a miserable 10-22 campaign.

Last season, Iowa lost its first two games at home and was 1-2 before traveling to Kansas City for the CBE Classic, where the Hawkeyes were defeated by both Texas and Wichita State.

With this game against the Jackrabbits on Nov. 14, followed by another home game on Nov. 16 against Louisiana-Monroe before heading to St. Thomas, Virgin Islands for the 2010 Paradise Jam, Iowa is determined to avoid a repeat of how things began at this time one year ago.

"We had no groove. To me at least, I could tell," sophomore guard Cully Payne said reflecting back on last season. "There was no 'He's my go-to guy,' or 'He does this real well.' There was no kind of sense of playing together, which I definitely think we have this year."

Adding to Payne's point was freshman forward Melsahn Basabe. While Basabe wasn't a member of last year's team, he has taken notice of good chemistry among everyone in the program.

"It seems like everybody is together, and really, all we have is each other," Basabe said. "People are kind of doubting us and stuff like that, so today, we come in here. It's a good bond between the players and the coaches."

"This is one of the few teams I've been on where there's no egos. It just feels good to play with people who don't have egos because then people are more comfortable with each other and not scared to talk to each other about what's going on on the court."

Still no official timetable on Gatens

If there is good news on the Matt Gatens front, he was expected to have the cast removed from his left hand after having surgery on Oct. 28 for a torn tendon near the thumb. Gatens said that the hand is healing precisely how the doctors anticipated.

According to both McCaffery and Gatens, the plan is for the 6-5 junior to attempt going through practices on Friday and Saturday and that he'll basically be a game-time decision for the season-opener against South Dakota State.

But while Gatens even admitted his status remains "up in the air," he made no bones about what would happen if given approval to be on the court, even at less than 100 percent.

"If they allow me to go out there and I can take it and still be helpful, dribble, catch and shoot, I'll be out there playing," the Iowa City native said.

If Gatens can't go, or can go but doesn't start, then McCaffery plans to have the same starting five he had in place for the Hawkeyes' exhibition win over Illinois-Springfield last weekend. He added if there is a change, it would be junior guard Bryce Cartwright coming in replacing freshman forward Zach McCabe.

"[Matt has] maintained himself physically," McCaffery said. "I think from a cardiovascular standpoint, he'll be fine. But in terms of getting your timing back down where it was, I mean, he was really in a groove. So it's understandable to think he might be a little rusty.

"Let's see what he does Friday and Saturday, if in fact, he can do anything."

Hawkeyes ink one 2011 recruit

McCaffery officially announced on Wednesday that the Hawkeyes successfully landed one incoming recruit for the 2011 class in 6-5 guard Josh Oglesby.

The Cedar Rapids Washington product became the first 2011 recruit to sign his national letter of intent with Iowa on Wednesday, which marked the first day recruits were allowed to sign during the fall recruiting period.

"I had an opportunity to watch him over the summer and the fall, and he consistently showed an incredible amount of versatility," McCaffery said in a statement (he was not allowed yet to discuss Oglesby during his Wednesday press conference). "He's an outstanding shooter, but more importantly, he's a really good basketball player."

"Josh wanted to be a Hawkeye, and there's no question in my mind that he's going to have a tremendous career. He's going to be somebody people remember around here for a long time."