

# 1/3/2011: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery's teleconference on Monday with the Big Ten media:

## **McCaffery's opening statement:**

*"I would say that I think our team is getting better. We have, obviously, a very difficult game on Tuesday night. I think [Jared] Sullinger is one of the best freshmen that I can remember in my entire coaching career watching on film, in terms of his maturity on the floor. Along with him, obviously [the Buckeyes] have a number of weapons that make them very difficult to prepare for, and that's why they're undefeated. A tall task for us, one that we're preparing for, and I feel like our young players are starting to develop. We're getting great play from Jarryd Cole. I feel like it's an opportunity for us to play two ranked teams."*

## **On dealing with Sullinger when Ohio State has talented play from its guards to worry about as well:**

*"You know, it's interesting when you watch this team play, there are days when you say [David] Lighty is their best player. Then another day, it's [William] Buford is their best player. Then Sullinger's their best player. Then [Jon] Diebler makes eight 3's in the next game. Then there are times when you say, 'Well, the guy that makes them go is [Aaron] Craft, the freshman point guard.' They put him in, and everything seems to go a little bit better. He loads everybody up. He*

feeds the post. But you know, when it's all said and done, I think a lot of it still revolves around Sullinger because he's almost impossible to guard one-on-one in the post, so if you double him, then they have too many shooters around.

"The thing about his game is he plays like an NBA veteran. That's how mature his game is. He doesn't make any mistakes, so if you double him, he doesn't panic. He's not a turnover guy. He gets to the free-throw line. Very efficient. But you know, I think one of the qualities of this team is... the reason why they're where they are is despite the fact they have a lot of seniors, real experienced players and real talented players, they're phenomenally unselfish and really share the ball. In that sense, they share the limelight. When you have a team like that, that's a team that can have a special season."

#### **On the challenges presented from Jon Diebler:**

"I think one of the things, and I've coached against him in the past, is that what's really unique is how big he is. He's one of those guys that you feel like you got to him, but he's 6-6 and long. He gets it off and shoots it in your face, even if you're on him. But a couple of things about him, one, he really works hard. When you get to that spot you're talking about, he sprints there. He works. He moves without the ball and makes himself hard to guard. Now you couple that with Buford and Lighty driving the ball, Craft is driving the ball, and the big fella in the hole, now he has got enough room to really do some damage.

"He was 5-for-5 against Indiana, made eight 3's in another game. He's shooting 51 percent. It's amazing because he's a guy that shoots a lot of 3's. Sometimes, you see those numbers and they're shooting 1-for-2. He puts them up there. Eighty-four percent or something like that of his shots are 3's for the season, so you know what he's going to do and he does it anyway. I think it's a function of how hard he works, and a

*function of who is playing with him."*

**On Basabe's health after playing sick in each of the last two games:**

*"He is more like himself. You know, he was sick for the Louisiana Tech game, played anyway, gave us some quality minutes. Obviously played against Illinois, 12 minutes, but he had no energy because he hadn't eaten in about five or six days. Just fluids. Put a couple of IVs in him. But he has been eating now, he has been practicing well. He's fine. Lost a few pounds, but he's fine."*

**On how he approaches facing a guy like Sullinger:**

*"Well, there are so many things that go into it and that's what makes this team so hard to prepare for because you spend all of this time on Sullinger, and they've got multiple double-figure scorers and shooters and experience in the other spots. But I don't think I could take one guy and say, 'You've got Sullinger.' There's not a team in America that could say that. I'm not sure the Lakers can say that. You have to deal with this guy. He's too strong, and he's too gifted."*

*"Melsahn might be too thin. He has played him before. They played against each other quite a bit in AAU, so at least there's that factor where they know each other. But Jarryd Cole, physically, is probably a better match for him. [Andrew] Brommer. Melsahn, maybe. But I think you're have to keep different people going, and we're going to have to change some defenses. I think that's the only way to deal with Sullinger."*

**On what he has seen from Purdue (Iowa's opponent this weekend):**

*"Well, I'm going to be honest with you. I have not watched a lot of Purdue yet. But I feel like I know them pretty well from last year. I did watch a little bit. I think the things that have impressed me about Matt [Painter]'s teams, obviously*

you've got "The Big Two." They just consistently score the ball. [JaJuan] Johnson runs the floor for a big man, and he has got a face-up game, he has got a low-post game, and he's so raw. And he's experienced. E'Twaun [Moore], you know, he's so versatile. He gets in the lane, he makes plays. But the other pieces around them, I think what they do is they defend, they compete, and they also, like I've been saying about Ohio State, they have a team of pieces that fit.

"They're a team that sort of came into this season expecting to win, and they do what they have to do, the necessary things to win. They're unselfish. Like I said, they play defense. Everybody kind of knows who the two guys are, but other people step up and score. It's a team that has a confidence about themselves when they take the floor. They're not cocky, but they believe in themselves, they believe in their coach. They're a team that, and I'm not going to say this about everybody, but they don't beat themselves. You've got to beat them."

**On whether he notices any major differences when Ohio State goes with the smaller lineup:**

"No, they're much better small I think. They're different. They're harder to guard. That's no disrespect to [Dallas] Lauderdale. I love Lauderdale. But when you go four around one with the big fella, and you've got four scorers, and you've got four drivers, four play-makers, it spreads you out in a way that makes it very difficult to defend that team. Because of the way they pass and the way they share the ball. If you had one guy that just held on to it and thought about himself, then that changes everything. But, they don't play that way. They are committed to winning.

"It's a team that's hard to press, it's a team that it's hard to get over and to get over and now you open up the big fella, then boom, boom. They make the extra pass to make the extra pass after that. They always seem to find the open man, and

*they're not a mistake team. So you think about defending this team and how we're going to force them into some mistakes, but they've almost got too much experience. They have all those seniors, and like I said, Sullinger's game is as mature as anybody's that I have ever seen, and Craft doesn't play like a freshman. Even though they put two young players into a line-up with a lot of experience, they seem to have blended rapidly into a team that, as I said, has a chance to have a real special season."*

**On if he has been pleased by the turnouts Iowa has had at Carver-Hawkeye Arena so far this season:**

*"Well, I have been. I think our fans have been phenomenal. We had a sell-out the other night. Obviously, there was some Illinois people there, but that's fine. We had a great crowd. I think they have responded to this team and how hard they play. We've got a difficult stretch of games coming up, but by the same token, I think our fans have such incredible respect for the Big Ten and want to see those teams. Illinois is ranked, Ohio State is No. 2, Purdue is in the top 10. They want to see these teams. They want to see where we are.*

*"I think what we'll do is we'll have a good game plan and we'll be ready to play. We'll play hard. When you play teams of this caliber, your margin for error is very small. It's plain and simple. We've got some inexperience and maybe not as much size, but I think we're making progress. I think we were in a position to win the Illinois game, and hopefully we learned something from that game that will help us in the Ohio State game."*