

1/6/2011: Matt Painter teleconference transcript (premium)

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Purdue head coach Matt Painter took part in a teleconference Thursday morning with members of both the Purdue and Iowa media to discuss the 11th-ranked Boilermakers' upcoming contest against Iowa on Jan. 9 at Mackey Arena in West Lafayette, Ind.

Below is the complete transcript of Painter's teleconference:

On what has caught his attention about the Hawkeyes up to this point:

"Well, what I think is encouraging for Iowa is the fact that they were in both games [against Illinois and Ohio State] and were in position to make some plays down the stretch to win both of those games against two very good teams. Without Eric May in one game and without the athletic freshman [Melsahn Basabe] in the other game, who in the Ohio State game, was just an unbelievable factor with his athleticism, blocking shots, and making plays. He had a great first half.

"I think they're a team that's developing, taking some time. They have some very good pieces – Matt Gatens, Eric May, the point guard just watching those games, Cartwright has done a good job for them. Zach McCabe is a good basketball player. He's physical, he's tough, he has got a skill level. Obviously, we all know about Jarryd Cole and how tough he is and how physical he is. They've got a very physical basketball team. They're a good rebounding basketball team, and that's

always a concern of ours. That's going to be very important that we do a good job of keeping them off the glass, not allowing second chance opportunities.

"But obviously, Fran has won at every place he has coached. His teams were tough to go against, obviously when we played them in the NCAA Tournament with Siena. They had a huge win in the NCAA Tournament against Ohio State the year before, and I think they beat Vanderbilt two years before that, if I'm not mistaken. So he has had a lot of success at all his stops, and recently in the NCAA Tournament. I'm just impressed with their team. It's tough in your first year and for those guys to be in this position where they're real close to winning games against top 15, top 5 teams in the country, just says a lot about him and his program."

On whether guard John Hart could return to Purdue's lineup on Sunday against Iowa:

"He could. I'm not saying he will. He looks good when he's running and then getting in the shooting workouts in our practices the last couple of days. He's going to have to do some contact stuff before we push forward, but he looks good. I have not seen him live, but I've seen him shoot, I've seen him move, I've seen him do sprints, lane slides, and it looks like it's coming along just like our trainers talked about. They thought he might be in a position to play in this game. So there's a chance he plays, but we'll see here Friday and Saturday when he practices."

On whether he likes the way his team has been rebounding up to this point:

"Yeah, I think they're doing a good job. Obviously, we play multiple defensive teams, so I think anytime you're switching from a 2-3 to a switch to man-to-man to a 1-3-1, and you're sprinkling in some press and some different stuff with different teams, you're going to have a little bit more of an

opportunity to crash the glass and get some rebounds. But our guards have done a good job. Obviously, JaJuan [Johnson] had a huge game the last game with 15 rebounds, so that was great to see. We've done a good job on the glass, but we've got to stick with it though. It's something that we've got to build up, keep working on, because you know it's that one game where if you slip up a little bit, they're going to get you."

On guard Ryne Smith continuing to find open looks in games:

"Well, I think it's a combination of who else is on the floor, and some of it was situational, like he had the one 3 [Wednesday against Penn State] off penetration. He had a couple of 3's off penetration. He had the one 3 when they pressed where he was at the end of the press and made his shot. He's just trying to pick his spots. Obviously, getting on the same side with JaJuan helps like in a 2-man game, and things of that nature. But he's a guy once he gets in rhythm, you think he's going to knock it down. I think that's where he is right now.

"When you're recruiting him, you witness him putting off some shooting displays that you're hoping when he got into college, he can get in because he could be a game-changer. If you can make 2-3 3's in a row in a 2-minute stretch, it can really change the game, and I think he has been able to do that, especially in the Michigan game and the Penn State game. But even in the Northwestern game, he missed five straight, then was able to knock down those two to finish it out, and that was a big momentum swing for us."

On how guard/forward D.J. Byrd is feeling physically with injuries coming back:

"Well, he's banged up. We're trying our best to keep him out of some contact stuff in practice, and actually just flat out take practices off. We're taking a day off today, so he'll get another day off. But I thought he showed some good signs out

there when he was playing, and hopefully it's a positive step for him to try and get to 100 percent. You know, it's what you try to do as a coach at this point. You move forward, and guys just kind of stay injured. But if you're at a point where you can hopefully keep a guy out of a lot of stuff and limit his minutes, you're working towards trying to get them 100 percent, so hopefully he can draw in that direction."

On whether this is the best he has seen guard Lewis Jackson play in his career thus far:

"Well, it's the best that he has scored. Obviously, he made some pull-ups and got into a rhythm shooting the basketball, so that's great to see. He still, in terms of running a team, he has got to make sure to stay grounded, don't turn the ball over late in the game when people are going to press us. Just be that ultimate leader out there on the court and as a point guard. We got a little frazzled in the Penn State game. That's something he's really going to have to be able to do when people press us. He's going to have to take care of the basketball, calm everybody down, and make sure we get a good shot on each possession."

On players responding against Penn State on Wednesday as guys like E'Twaun Moore were struggling:

"Yeah. I think this game was important for each one of those guys' confidence that stepped up, but also in our team's confidence in them to step up and make plays. I thought E'Twaun did a good job. He had five assists, no turnovers, and he didn't let it frustrate him. A lot of times, he gets frustrated when things don't go his way in terms of scoring, and then he kind of forces the issue. In this game, he didn't. He got in foul trouble, and that made it even more frustrating for him. But he really kept his composure, and other guys stepped up and made plays, so I think it's great for our team."

On how much better the Boilermakers can get from that standpoint and who else he feels needs to step up:

"Well, I think it just depends on the game. It just depends on what our opponent is trying to do. Obviously, bringing John Hart back is going to make it very competitive in those guard slots. But I think each guy just has to do a little bit better. That's what we're always trying to do. We're trying to make improvement from day-to-day, and game-to-game. I don't think it's one particular guy. I think our big guys are going to get more of a chance to play against certain teams, and they have to be ready. I thought Travis Carroll was ready to play. I thought he gave us some productive minutes and really helped us. But it's always going to be that next guy. You never know. You got to think you're the next guy, and when your number gets called, you got to be ready to play."

On where he sees his team defensively at this point:

"I thought we had some breakdowns in the Penn State game, especially our transition defense I don't think was very good at all. We did some good things in the half-court. We didn't let [Talor] Battle really get into a rhythm, so I thought that was a positive, until the end, we let him get loose for a couple of shots. But for the most part, we've got to do better in the transition defense and just really carrying out our assignment. I thought our guys did a pretty good job. The ball was getting to the basket too much. We've got to keep the ball in front of us. But those are things that we work on anyway. I think we're in a good position, but we've got to stay on edge and keep trying to get better, and just be more physical."

On whether Iowa resembles the Siena team from last season Purdue faced in last year's NCAA Tournament:

"Yeah, I think there's some comparisons. Obviously, it's not ideal. [Siena] had a lot of skill at those other positions. They had kind of their 2, 3, 4, and then they had some

different guys. Here, I think [Iowa is] a very physical team. I think with McCabe and Cole, and Eric May, Gatens, and the freshman, the athletic freshman. That kid's a good player. He's talented, he's strong, he blocks shots. So I think they bring a physical presence to the Big Ten, and they really get after you.

"I think when you're adjusting like this, and you're trying to kind of feel your way, you don't know your players that well. In your first year, you watch film and everything, but you're learning. It's like Jerome Johnson for me. You're trying to get him figured out. You're trying to help him, but there are times when those guys jump up and they surprise you. I think that's just kind of the learning experience as you go through that first year as the head coach at a new school."

On having been able to score in the 80s the past few games after only doing so once in Big Ten play last year:

"We've played multiple defensive teams that mix things up. They throw some press at you, they throw some zone at you, whether it's a 2-3 or a 1-3-1, switching man-to-man, so with that, I think our guys have done a good job of adjusting when they've switched. We've been able to find some gaps and get some open looks and also have been able to get in transition. We take some long rebounds and some turnovers and convert them at the other end. So I think it's a combination of the opponents that we've played and their changing defenses, and our guys' awareness to adjust to it. And then obviously we've made some shots. We've gotten into a pretty good rhythm here. But we'll see. Each team has a different style. Hopefully, we can continue to shoot the ball well and just be efficient."

On what he is most concerned about while Purdue is on its current win streak:

"I would say taking care of the basketball. Just overall decision-making. I thought that even though we scored 50

points in the second half, I thought it was poor. We had a chance with the opportunities they were giving us. They were scrambling because they were behind a little bit, and we didn't take advantage of it. We threw the basketball away, we were carless with it. And then with free throws. That's something obviously we work on every single day. We had a chance to put the game away, and we didn't because we didn't take care of the ball, we didn't make good decisions, and our free throws.

"So that's the reason it was a long second half. It seemed like the last 10 minutes of the game was forever. But those are the things that concern me, and rebounding always concerns me. Our stats looks good right now, but that always concerns me. We have to stay on top of rebounding, everybody going to the glass, and then really chasing long rebounds down, just getting and finding our guy at times. But at times he gets away from us, we got to just chase the ball and get that long rebound, that loose ball."

On whether the recent production on offense affects when Hart returns to the Purdue lineup:

"No, I think it will really be on John. John did a good job for us when he was in there. We don't want to push anything. If he's ready to go, then we'll try. How many minutes he gets will be on how he feels, and also how other people play. I think that's what's going to be great for our team. John has got a great attitude and gets along with everybody, and he is going to come out there and fight. He wants to play. Now, maybe some guys that are careless with the ball or not carrying out their assignments like they need to, now you have another guy to go to right there. It's a great situation for our team because it keeps everybody on their toes and keeps people away from being cashed."

On the adjustment from non-conference play to conference play:

"I would say from a personnel standpoint, there's no doubt about it. You're just familiar with [your conference]. You've been through it, and your players are familiar with their players. So I think you do have that familiarity where guys understand what you're talking about, especially your upper-classmen."

On whether he's concerned about his players overlooking Iowa:

"I don't think that our guys will be that way. They have a lot of respect for Iowa. They watched them play the other night against Ohio State. They had to be impressed. You saw how physical Iowa was and how hard Iowa played. They put themselves in a position to win the game, and that says a lot. Ohio State could be the best team in the country. They're ranked second in the country right now, but Ohio State is a pretty impressive club. Our guys definitely respect them and understand that we have a team that I feel can beat anybody in the country, and I also feel it's one of those teams that can get beat by a lot of people in the country. We got to be hooked up every single night. Our strength lies, in my opinion, in our togetherness, our chemistry, our work ethic, a lot of the little things. But you have to stay on top of them. You got to stick together."

On what he felt Basabe was able to do defensively against Ohio State's Jared Sullinger:

"Well, Sullinger is a tough cover. Obviously, he's one of the best players in the country, so I think that's why that was so impressive for just his effort and his defensive presence. Obviously, he scored the ball also in that first half. His length, being able to make [Sullinger] adjust his shots, and you know obviously the times that he did block him. He's just a good, long, athletic, range-y type player that has caused mismatch problems for a lot of people. But Jared Sullinger is one of those guys, he is not your typical freshman. He's a grown man, and he's skilled, and he's going to keep coming at

you. Obviously, you saw in the second half, especially in the start of the second half, that they really wanted to establish him. Even when he got his shot blocked that first play, he just kept coming at him. But I was impressed. I was impressed with Iowa, period."

On what he took away from facing McCaffery last year that makes him a good fit at Iowa:

"Well, I think his teams play real hard. I think they play smart. If I'm not mistaken, last year, [Siena] had the fewest fouls of anyone that was in the NCAA Tournament, so they're physical, but they're also smart. [Iowa is] going to play a high-paced tempo, they're going to push the basketball, they're going to change defenses on you. They're going to make you play. He just has a very, very good system. In his defense, I don't think it was fair last year. Obviously, we lost a real good player [Robbie Hummel] at the end of the year, but [Siena] lost a real good player right before we played them. So we had some games where we could adjust without Robbie Hummel, and they didn't have really any time to adjust without one of their top scorers, who was averaging 15-16 points at the time. I think we caught them at the right time when they lost him."