

# 1/14/2011: Iowa men's basketball notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game on Jan. 16 at Minnesota with the local media during a press conference on Friday, Jan. 14, 2011 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City.

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Following consecutive losses to Purdue and Northwestern that were both lopsided outcomes, confidence appears lost right now for the Iowa Hawkeyes, who currently sit tied for last place in the Big Ten at 0-4.

As they begin a stretch of four out of five on the road Jan. 16 at Minnesota, regaining confidence is something Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery believes is vital.

"We've got to have a better game," McCaffery said during his press conference on Friday. "We've got to play better. We can teach and we can break the film down and we can make teaching points. We can get them out there and work them hard."

Restoring confidence won't be an easy task against the Golden Gophers, especially after Minnesota upset No. 8 Purdue 70-67 on Jan. 13 inside Williams Arena, where Sunday's contest will be taking place.

In fact, since Tubby Smith took over the coaching reigns at Minnesota in 2007, the Hawkeyes are winless against the Golden Gophers. The most recent meeting between the two was the regular-season finale last year for both teams, a decisive 88-53 victory for Minnesota.

For some of the players remaining from last year's squad, the 35-point drubbing hasn't been forgotten.

"When you look back at it, it was disappointing," junior guard Matt Gatens said. "We really got outplayed. They really gave it to us up there, and even here last year, it was a rough game.

"I think we have some pretty recent memories of this team, and hopefully that plays a role in our motivation and how hard we're going to work."

### **Getting May going again**

Neither sophomore forward Eric May nor McCaffery shied away from questions regarding the Dubuque native's recent struggles. Since sitting out Iowa's Jan. 4 contest against Ohio State with a pulled groin, May has been virtually non-existent statistically, only finishing with three points and two rebounds against Purdue and being completely shut out by Northwestern, not coming away with any points or boards.

May admitted his slump has less to do with the groin injury he suffered, and added that finding multiple ways to be involved on the court is what he has been and continues to need working on now.

"I can't just rely on trying to drive the ball, trying to get

open jump shots. It starts with me getting a tip out, getting a fast break steal or something, the stuff I was doing back earlier in the year, just to get going in each game.”

McCaffery made clear he will let May work out of his current woes and has no intentions of taking him out of the starting lineup anytime soon.

“I’m going to give the minutes that he needs to play through it,” McCaffery said. “I think when you start to struggle, if your coach loses confidence in you and benches you, blames you, whatever, then it’s not going to help.

“He wants to be a good teammate, so any time he starts to struggle, then he needs to stop worrying about that and play with a little more reckless abandon.”

### **Dealing more with the present than the past**

McCaffery was asked Friday whether he puts any merit into what occurred a year ago when scouting upcoming Big Ten opponents. He responded by saying he doesn’t actually look at how Iowa fared in 2010, but does give it some thought.

One of the examples he gave specifically during his press conference came from the Hawkeyes’ loss to Northwestern during a sequence where Wildcat guard John Shurna knocked down one of the 14 3-point field goals Northwestern had that evening.

He mentioned how senior center Jarryd Cole went to close out and keep Shurna in front of him, and what resulted was Shurna nailing a 3-point bucket in front of Cole.

“It’s not O.K. to just recover and keep that guy in front of you,” McCaffery said, adding that Gatens informed him that was how players were taught by the previous coaching regime. “That’s O.K. if you’re playing a driving team, but if you’re playing a team that’s going to shoot 3’s, then you’ve got to get up in them a little bit better.

"We talked about that, and hopefully we'll do a better job of it."

Cole responded to the example McCaffery used, and acknowledged that the biggest obstacle going into this season was putting to rest everything he learned during his first three seasons as an Iowa player.

"It has kind of been a struggle, I'm not going to lie," Cole said. "It has been a little bit of a struggle. But I definitely want to do it, and I definitely want to be the kind of player that he wants to mold us into."

"We're definitely going to get there, but it's going to take a little bit of time, a little bit of effort, and a little bit of focus."

### **Finding consistency**

As troubling as the losses thus far in Big Ten play have been for McCaffery, inconsistency has become a big concern. Other than Gatens, who has scored double figures in seven straight games, individual performances have been somewhat sporadic.

For instance, junior guard Bryce Cartwright recently scored 25 points in the Hawkeyes' loss to Northwestern, but it came after a dreadful showing at Purdue. Meanwhile, forwards like juniors Andrew Brommer and Devon Archie, who came off the bench and were bright spots for Iowa against the Boilermakers, were non-factors against the Wildcats.

McCaffery mentioned all these, plus a few others, as evidence that Iowa needs to find some sort of consistency in order to rediscover winning ways.

"We need to get four or five guys playing consistently well, and then we can plug those other guys in," McCaffery said. "That's how you do it."