

# 1/17/2011: 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 feel like yesterday, despite our defeat, we played a really good Minnesota team, and I thought we played the kind of basketball that gives us a chance to win, which we have been playing most of the year. I thought against Purdue and Northwestern, we kind of took a step back, and I think yesterday, we kind of took a step back forward to competing the way that we're capable of, and really limiting our mistakes. That's what we have to do to beat the teams of this caliber."*

## **On if he had ever faced a No. 1 team and how the dynamic might change:**

*"You know, that's an interesting question. I've never really thought about it. I'm sure I have. I don't remember it as a player, but I think at some point in time, I must have. I did. I'll tell you what. We played Missouri one year when they were ranked No. 1. We played them, it was in 89-90 [when McCaffery was an assistant at Notre Dame]. They were ranked No. 1, and they had Doug Smith and [Anthony] Peeler and that group. It was our last regular season game or second-to-last regular season game. If we had won the game, we were in. We were a bubble team that year. If we had lost the game, we were out."*

We won the game. We actually won by like 33 points, which is kind of interesting. I think that might be the only time.

"But I do think it brings a different dynamic for both teams. I think Ohio State, coming into the season, felt like they had a chance to be one of the elite teams and make a run to the Final Four, and they've played that way. Every night, they're getting everybody's best. They know that we played them tough here. But my impression of them is that they haven't really let down. They've won a lot of close games, and they've shown an incredible ability to win tight games, to make the plays necessary to win those tight games, and they've been especially good at home.

"I think we know... we're going on the road to play the No. 1 team in the country. We'll need a performance like yesterday in terms of minimizing our mistakes. But the irony of it was I think all of our mistakes came in about one stretch of 6-7 minutes. That, against the No. 1 team in the country, is not going to get it done. So we have to minimize those mistakes and get a little more production off the bench."

**On how to build on having minimal mistakes against Minnesota last weekend:**

"Well you know, obviously we erased an 11-point lead pretty quickly and put ourselves in a position to win. They made a run, we made a run, we made another run again. If you only turn it over twice, you give your team a chance. You know, you look at some of the better teams in our league, Northwestern in particular, they don't turn the ball over. Purdue doesn't turn the ball over. Ohio State doesn't turn the ball over. These teams do not turn the ball over. Illinois does not turn the ball over. You can survive a lower-percentage shooting night if you don't have empty possessions.

"A lot of times, what happens is when you turn the ball over, they're scoring, and that obviously makes it a lot worse. We

had a couple of turnovers yesterday where we were driving up hill, lost the ball, well that's a runout for them. They got some runout baskets, and all of a sudden, [Royce] Williams is making a monster dunk off our turnovers. Those kinds of plays really change the momentum of the game. I always talk about in addition to that, and our shot selection was pretty good. There were a couple of times where the pressure we gave them, we kind of jacked, and a bad shot is exactly the same as a turnover because it's a long rebound and a runout opportunity for a team that runs like Minnesota, and it's essentially the same as an empty possession."

**On the play of Ohio State's Aaron Craft and whether he would have such an early impact for the Buckeyes:**

"I tell you what, I did. There was no question in my mind when I saw him. I remember, we were on the road and they were playing Florida. They put him in, and I did not know who he was, and I remember how impressed I was with a couple of things – his quickness, his court vision, his toughness. Above all else, he was not playing like a freshman. He came off the bench and impacted the game in a very unique way for a young freshman point guard.

"Of course, as we prepared for them, I watched a substantial amount of tape. It became evident that not only was he a really good player, I think he was a very important part of why this team was ranked second at the time and now ranked first. So when we prepared to play them, we treated him as such, in terms of the scouting report. We made sure our guys knew that this guy was an essential part of why this team was undefeated and not a complementary piece, some guy who comes off the bench that's not bad and doesn't make any mistakes.

"Thad [Matta] trusts him. Often times, they go small, and a good portion of the time, they're actually better when they're small. As I said before, no disrespect to [Dallas] Lauderdale, who I think is a very good player. But it gives them a

*different dynamic. It enables them to switch more on the perimeter, and the wing guys do enough rebounding and [Jared] Sullinger gets enough rebounds that they can survive it and it makes them really, really hard to guard. There is no question in my mind that he is a big, big-time player."*

### **On the recent play of Melsahn Basabe:**

*"I'll tell you what. I was really pleased with Melsahn's game yesterday, especially going up against somebody like [Trevor] Mbakwe, who has been so dominant and so strong and has that maturity over Melsahn. But I thought he battled him toe-to-toe, and what we're seeing Melsahn do is develop as a scorer, which we desperately need – an inside scoring presence, and also minimizing mistakes. He had one turnover in 35 minutes. So 20 points, 13 rebounds, one turnover in 35 minutes against Mbakwe, I think, is a pretty good day for a freshman."*

*"The key for him, I think, is ever since the game against Ohio State when he played well against Sullinger, he became more of a marked man than he was prior to that. He has to understand that now, and play the same way every time out. Against Northwestern, I didn't think he had a good game offensively, but he still had 12 rebounds, so I was proud of him for that. At Purdue, he looked a little lost. He sort of played like a freshman that day, and I think that's part of becoming an experienced player. I think what you're seeing him do is gain confidence, gain knowledge, get comfortable with his teammates, and he's just going to keep getting better and better."*