

# 1/28/2011: Iowa men's basketball notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game at Michigan with the local media during his press conference on Friday, Jan. 28, 2011 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Before Thursday evening, it looked as though this weekend's game between Iowa and Michigan would merely be a battle to see who could avoid the Big Ten cellar before February arrived.

After the Wolverines' 61-57 win over No. 25 Michigan State on Thursday, suddenly this game doesn't appear quite as low key.

Between Michigan and Indiana both being victorious, Iowa now finds itself alone in last place at 1-7 in the Big Ten as the Hawkeyes prepare to battle the Wolverines at Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor, Mich., on Jan. 30.

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said it didn't surprise him to

see Michigan prevail, but it was something that definitely caught the attention of players.

“That’s an impressive win any time you come out of a place like the Breslin Center with a ‘W,’” junior guard Matt Gatens said. “We’ll break the tape down and learn as much as we can from it. It should be a good game up there.”

One of the driving forces for Michigan this season has been sophomore guard Darius Morris, who leads the Wolverines in both scoring and assists, averaging 15.6 points and seven assists per game.

“It’s his relentless that to me separates him,” McCaffery said. “Just when you think he has run out of real estate and there’s nothing possible he can make out of the play, he ends up making the play somehow.”

### **Facing a former assistant**

When the Hawkeyes and Wolverines square off, there will be a familiar face on the Michigan bench in assistant coach LaVall Jordan.

Not only was Jordan an assistant for three years at Iowa under former head coach Todd Lickliter, but he was involved in the recruiting with most of the current Hawkeye roster, including freshman guard Roy Devyn Marble prior to his departure from Iowa.

“I’ve talked to him a few times,” Marble said. “That is still one of my good friends and somebody that I still appreciate, because he did a lot for me before he went to Michigan. He’s somebody I still keep in touch with.”

McCaffery said he doesn’t see Jordan’s expertise on Iowa’s player personnel giving Michigan an advantage on Sunday because of some of the differences between this year’s squad and the one that Jordan worked with.

Meanwhile, Gatens acknowledged Jordan probably has had an easier time scouting Iowa given his relationships with some of the players, but that he wouldn't let something like his former assistant coach divulging Hawkeye player tendencies get in the way of what Iowa hopes to accomplish.

"He probably recruited over half of our team and coached most of us, a lot of us," Gatens said. "He maybe knows some inside things on our games, but we just got to go up there and play hard, and stick to our game, don't worry about that too much.

"In this league, everybody knows a lot about you and your game. We just need to come out with energy on both ends of the floor and come out with a victory."

### **Marble returns home**

His father might have played at Iowa, but this weekend will still be a homecoming of sorts for Marble.

The 6-5 guard is a native of Southfield, Mich., which he said Friday is about 35 minutes away from Michigan's campus in Ann Arbor. With this in mind, he said he expects between 20-25 family members and friends to be on hand for support.

"It's just a good opportunity to play in front of my family and some of my friends that haven't really been able to see me play since I've been in college," Marble said.

As for Marble's productivity this season, McCaffery likes his aggressiveness, saying he wants him to be an attacker when he has the ball. He also reiterated the struggles that have come being the team's back-up point guard while developing into that 2-guard McCaffery envisions Marble being.

"I think that has been a unique challenge for him this year, understanding that when he's at the two, just go ahead and attack, and when you're at the one, maybe, maybe not," McCaffery said. "I think that he has proven that he could

score. I think for him, strength is going to be an issue.

"With his length, and his athletic ability, the only thing that is holding him back from potentially becoming a premiere player is his strength."

Marble said he expects to see his mom and uncle on Saturday when the team arrives in Ann Arbor, but outside of that, he doesn't get the sense that the spotlight might shine brighter on him this weekend with returning to his home state.

"I just want to win, just like I do any other game," Marble said. "I'm not coming in with a different mentality or anything. I just try to play well like I do every game, no matter who is watching."

"Even though this will be, for some of them, their first time watching me live, they've seen me play on TV and stuff."

## **Second guessing coaching decisions**

Following the Hawkeyes' 65-51 loss on Jan. 26 at Penn State, McCaffery said he had taken out freshman forward Melsahn Basabe because he thought production was coming from both senior center Jarryd Cole and junior forward Andrew Brommer. As a result, Basabe only played 20 minutes and finished with a total of just four points and two rebounds.

On Friday, McCaffery admitted he questioned himself some about not giving Basabe more minutes against the Nittany Lions after he had a bit of time to reflect.

"I thought the experience might be better suited for the situation that we were in," McCaffery said. "In that respect, I probably should have gone back to him and seen if he could figure it out and get him that experience."

"But the game was in the balance there. It was a two-possession game, five minutes to go, and I just went with my experience."

Despite the frustrations McCaffery and his staff may have had with Basabe and others during their loss at Penn State, Basabe not only said he doesn't take criticisms personal, but that they motivate him.

"I don't think he's doing anything he's not supposed to be doing," Basabe said. "He has been coaching us up, and he's supportive of us in practice, and he's trying to get the most out of us. As a player, you don't want nothing but that."