

2/4/2011: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Friday prior to the Hawkeyes' game on Feb. 5 against Indiana at Assembly Hall in Bloomington, Ind.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

On what makes Indiana different from the last time Iowa played the Hoosiers:

"Well, I think their personnel is different. [Verdell] Jones is back, [Christian] Watford is out. I think in particular, [Tom] Pritchard has really stepped his game up. I think he and [Derek] Elston both, with Watford's absence, those guys are looking to do more, and are capable of doing more. They can be hammer guys and rebound and be physical, but they're both skilled. So now they're scoring the ball a little bit better, and I think that has been a positive for them. That's where those guys, despite having the key injuries, those guys have really stepped up. [Jordan] Hulls has been consistent. They're getting great play off the bench. You know, [Matt] Roth has stepped his game up. I've noticed some different things defensively, but they just play with tremendous energy at home, in particular. It will be a really tough game for us."

On what he took from the win over MSU that could carry through the rest of the year:

"I think what it is, it's an example of what we're capable of doing, and now the task is can we do it consistently. Yeah,

you've seen us play, but we've played that way at times. The largest thing, the largest for job for all of us – players and coaches – is to make sure that we do that for 40 minutes. That was clearly our best effort of the season in terms of a 40-minute commitment to what we're trying to do. I think it is a little bit of a boost in confidence, and I do think when you look at how we played, we were able to score the ball effectively. I think a lot of it was the result that we were able to stop them with our defense, and we started the game with a 15-2 run on offense."

On what Verdell Jones III does for Indiana that makes it different now:

"Well, it does a lot of things. No. 1, it gives them another scorer, another creator. But it also enables them to move some other guys around. It takes some of the pressure off of Hulls if they can play together. They can put Roth in and have three scorers in the back. [Jeremiah] Rivers has another guy, if he has got the ball, to penetrate and kick to. You've got shot-makers and drivers, creators, and they run a lot of different things offensively with spacing and misdirection, and screening action and ball screens. [Jones'] terrific in ball screens, so he's definitely a big-time weapon."

On what difference there might be in preparation for Indiana this time around:

"The challenge for us is adapting. They're doing some things a little bit differently and have a little bit different personnel. But it's a lot of the same personnel. We kind of know some of the things they're going to do, and they know some things about us. It will be a different atmosphere, a different experience to go down there and do it. We played some pretty good defense here, but they also had a lot of open looks that they missed. We have to really, really be conscious of getting out on the shooters, they'll shoot it better at home, making sure we rebound, and make sure that when they

make a run, we withstand the run and have some runs of our own."

On Bryce Cartwright's improvement over the past couple of months:

"Well, he has always had the ability. He has always scored the ball and he has always made plays. What he has done is he has really locked in mentally to that position, which is kind of a cerebral position. He sort of played the game in a free-flowing manner, and I don't think he ever really thought the game thoroughly. He just kind of relied on his instincts and his talent. He's good, and he got to the Big Ten doing it that way. But when you start playing against sophisticated defenses and going against the point guards in our league, you have really got to think the game differently, and he's bright. He understands the game, and he's studying the game, so that's improving."

"He has also, I think, adjusted to the fact that he's going to be playing a lot of minutes. In the beginning, he was playing a lot, but it was in the 20's. Now it's in the 30's. That takes a tremendous amount of conditioning, and where it was affecting him was at the defensive end. He knew that we needed him to do a lot at the offensive end, but he was coasting a little bit defensively. He has got himself in great shape, and now he is impacting the game at both ends of the floor, which I think has also been helpful to his confidence."

On what he sees different in terms of Indiana's improvements:

"I think they're really playing together. They're playing physical. They're playing inspired. I mean, they are really working and covering for each other. And they're also mixing it. They've played the zone, they've played the man, they played some jump, mixed in a little bit of pressure, so they're keeping you on your toes, and it has worked for them. Not only at home, but on the road."

On if he is bothered by not getting enough credit nationally for Iowa beating MSU:

"You know, I look at it this way. I'm pretty realistic in my approach. We're talking about a Hall-of-Fame coach here in Tom Izzo. We're talking about one of the two or three top programs in the last 15 years in college basketball, so they were going to be the story, one way or the other. They lost some games that they weren't expected to lose, so that is going to be what people focus on. They've been in the tournament, what, 14-15 straight years, whatever it is, and if they're not, then that's a story. I get it. But, I do think people recognize that we played well, and the challenge for us is to keep playing well. When we do that, then we'll get the recognition that we deserve."

On the message he preaches to his players going on the road following a big win:

"When we go on the road, we take a very business-like approach. Normally, quite frankly, I don't get too high or too low. I just approach the game in a professional manner, and want them to do the same. This is a very unique situation. You know, we played our most complete game, against a storied program. It was wonderful, and we enjoyed it, but it's one game. We're playing a team that is playing as well, if not better, than any other team in the league right now, maybe with the exception of Ohio State. Indiana, since our game, has played incredibly well. I'm trying to convey that to the team because they haven't really watched them. We've been focused on other games."

"Now I have been watching them. They're playing well, and they got guys stepping up. When you look at a guy like Pritchard and how he played here, he was good. But right now, he's playing like an elite player in our league, so I've got to convey that message. What we don't want to do is sort of get too high after a big win like this, and then have a letdown"

where we play poorly. We're going to have to play extremely well, every bit as well as we played Wednesday night to win on Saturday. I mean, it's that simple because this team has played too hard and they have got too many guys contributing, and they're really good at home, and they're going to be doing some different things.

"To a man, we're going to have to play the way we played the other night, and I think that was the key. If you look at the feats of our individual players, great energy level at the defensive end, effective at the offensive end. That hasn't always been the case. We've had some guys stumble, and we've had some breakdowns. As we've matured, we've gotten better in that area."

On his assessment of Eric May and where he is at right now:

"I think he's in a good place, He has practiced well throughout. He has had a couple of stinkers on the road. He is his own worst enemy, and we talk about that. We constantly try to encourage him. I thought the other night, he got off to a great start. He had a stretch in the game where he didn't play well, and then he came back and played great, and to me, that's the key for him. Normally, he either plays well, or he plays poorly.

"What we've got to be able to do is understand that if he has a stretch of 3-4 minutes where he takes it off his foot, makes a crazy foul, and misses a shot, then O.K., there's still 27 minutes to go in the game. You've got plenty of time to come back, hit two 3's, and make a steal and dunk the ball on the break, block your man out, and just keep plugging that way. When he does that, we're a better team. I think he is slowly maturing, and I still think he's a really, really good player in our league."

On the improvements Devon Archie has made since the season began:

"I have really been impressed with him. You know, I'm really proud of him. He came into this season I think, and I'm talking about him now, not my expectations for him. I think he had very low expectations for himself, and as he started to feel healthy again, and he started to get up and down, he started making plays. Slowly, but surely, he started to think, 'Hey, wait a minute. I can be a factor here. I can be effective.' Now he wants it. I thought he was fabulous the other night. Fabulous.

"Again, you tend to look at the numbers and say, well he had great rebounding in the first half and really gave you a presence that you needed inside defensively. But when you watch the tape, he has got a really good feel for how to play. His effectiveness, in terms of grading out on film, was even better than what we thought when the game ended. Closing on penetration, recovering, having a set of good traffic rebounding, outleted quickly, and triggered the break. The blocked shot he made stands out. But he came from the weak side, he saw the play develop, he almost jumped on the fake, waited, then blocked the next one. Really, really gave us the quality minutes that we needed and gives us another big guy that we can go to with confidence."

On Andrew Brommer's status for Saturday's game after being sick:

"He did not practice yesterday. I feel like he's going to be fine. We put an I.V. in him yesterday. We have not had practice today. I'll see when we get there how he's doing. I expect him to come on the trip, I expect him to play. But I have not had any official word."