

# 3/7/2011: 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:

## **Opening statement:**

*"Well, you know, it was an interesting week for us. Go on the road, play well at Michigan State for about 30 minutes, don't play particularly well down the stretch and I thought they did. It was "Senior Night" for them. They wanted to play well. They wanted to win. It was an important game for them, and they got the job done. We come home, play one of the best teams in the country, and feel as though we needed to put a 40-minute effort together to have any chance, and I think without question, that was our best 40-minute effort of the season, and I'm very proud of our guys in getting a great win over Purdue."*

## **On the importance of having that best 40-minute effort come late in the season against a quality opponent:**

*"Well, you know what I think it is, it's a reflection on, in particular, our senior captain, Jarryd Cole, who is a really amazing individual. You know, recruited by one coach, played for another, now plays for another, and just kept coming, just kept fighting, and has phenomenal credibility in the locker room due to his work ethic and his character."*

*"This team has continued to fight. We continue to get better. We have struggled at times shooting the ball, we've been*

plagued by scoring droughts, sometimes in both halves, but keep fighting through tough overtime losses to Michigan and Wisconsin, just kept coming, and really have, you know, played a lot better I think than our record shows. But then you feel like, well, at some point, we need to get over the hump, and to get over the hump against a team the caliber of Purdue, who might have been playing as well as, if not better than, anybody in the country, and in particular, I think their style of play.

"You have to beat Purdue. They don't beat themselves. They come after you defensively in a way that just requires you to give 100 percent every possession, every cut. They pressure everything that you do, and it's a mindset that you have to have to have any chance to beat that team. So I was really proud of how our players responded, and we had a phenomenal crowd. It was a great day at Carver."

**On how much last weekend's win over Purdue meant to him in terms of making the move to Iowa last year:**

"You know, I'll be honest with you. I never wavered on that decision. I knew all about this program, and as I said, I have a great affinity for the Big Ten and have a tremendous respect for it. To have the opportunity to coach in the Big Ten was a challenge that I looked forward to, that I welcomed, that I was excited about, and I've gotten tremendous support from President [Sally] Mason, [Iowa athletics director] Gary Barta, from pretty much everybody that is a Hawkeye fan.

"Our players have committed to me, they have committed to one another to getting better. I mean, we've seen improvement in individuals, we've seen improvement as a team. I just never get too up, I never get too down. I'm not overly excited about Saturday. I wasn't overly disappointed after we lost to Michigan State.

"It's a situation where, and I've said this to you and I've

*said this to a lot of people, I'm in it for the long haul. So you have to just bear down and keep working. You know, I surrounded myself with a great staff, and we recruit quality people to this program, and we're going to just keep doing that, and we're going to just keep working and getting better and keep coming up with game plans that we think can be successful, and compete every night out, and I think over time, we'll see more and more wins."*

**On if preparation for Michigan State this week is easier given last week's outcome in East Lansing:**

*"You know, I think it's an advantage for both teams because we're fresh in each other's minds. You know, obviously we can point to some of the things we did well, some of the things we didn't do well. When we played them before, it was a while ago, and we've changed, and they've changed, but how much have we changed in a week? Obviously, we played better, but they had a very tough road game against a really good team, and played decently. They played pretty well. So from a personnel standpoint, we'll have to go over a lot. Style of play, we'll make a few changes, they'll make a few changes. But now when you get to this point in the season, both teams are pretty set with what they do and how they do it."*

**On who he voted Big Ten Player of the Year:**

*"JaJuan Johnson."*

**On what went into his decision of voting Johnson as Big Ten Player of the Year:**

*"Well, I think it's a number of things. I look at what he did for his team, how consistent was he, how dominant was he. To me, the three best players were JaJuan Johnson, [Ohio State forward] Jared Sullinger and [Penn State guard] Talor Battle. I think it's a little bit harder for Jared because he has got so much help. You could argue multiple players from Ohio State for Player of the Year, but I think the reason that they're*

one of the favorites to win the national championship is because they don't care about that. They share the ball like very few teams that I have ever coached against.

"JaJuan, I mean let's face it: [Purdue] was going to him. They go to him. E'Twaun Moore is a first-round pick, but he had a slump midway through the season, and then JaJuan Johnson carried that team during that period of time. I've been impressed with him, and I felt like he deserved it."

**On how Johnson has improved since Purdue played McCaffery's Siena squad in the NCAA Tournament:**

"Well, he's really difficult to stop as a scorer. You know, he scores the ball, and actually in our game in the tournament, he made some big shots, and he made some big shots away from the basket, and I think that's the thing that makes him so difficult. He's so long, and he's so crafty around the basket, but he can shoot turnaround jumpers, he can shoot 17-footers, he can stand at the 3-point line. I've coached against too many guys who face a variety of different directions when they leave the floor, but still are able to get their shoulders and their bodies square to the bucket and make shots.

"But I think what we've watched him evolve into is a tremendously consistent player. I mean, he blocks shots, he runs the floor, he scores the ball. He doesn't arch shots. You know, he's not selfish at all. And he's a winning player. I'm sure he has gotten stronger and more confident as his body has matured, but he just has a really good way about him on the floor. He doesn't panic, and you can tell that he thinks, that he understands and he reacts. He's going to be playing for a long time."