

# 10/13/2011: Iowa Media Day notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery talks about the Hawkeyes' upcoming 2011-12 season during a press conference as part of the team's annual Media Day on Oct. 13, 2011, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. McCaffery is entering his second season as Iowa's head coach.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – “Optimistic” could describe the state of the Iowa men’s basketball program entering the 2011-12 season. However, “confident” might be the more appropriate term when it comes to the feelings of head coach Fran McCaffery and his players.

Record-wise, McCaffery’s first season coaching the Hawkeyes might not have been what they expected, finishing 11-20 overall and 4-14 in Big Ten play, including a 66-61 loss to Michigan State in the first round of the Big Ten Tournament last March. McCaffery wouldn’t use the word “disappointed”

when talking about how last season unfolded, but he also continues to expect more of his team.

Now, his sights are set on postseason play, and it's the way he wants his players thinking as well, regardless of how realistic Iowa's chances actually end up being.

"You're going to have some bumps in the road, but what you have to be able to do is figure out a way to improve when you stumble," McCaffery said during Iowa's Media Day on Thursday. "You're not going to be perfect every night. If each individual gives you what he's got and improves, which is what I've seen, then you've got a shot.

"That has got to be the goal, and it's our goal. It has been our goal."

It isn't just McCaffery though that has shown confidence. Players such as seniors Bryce Cartwright and Matt Gatens, junior Eric May, and sophomore Melsahn Basabe all exuded confidence, not only in the steps the Hawkeyes have taken in preparing for this upcoming season, but with what they see lying ahead.

"I definitely think everybody is lightyears ahead of where they were, and now that makes it easier for freshmen to come around and know what they're doing," Basabe said. "Last year, I couldn't talk to anyone because nobody knew what they were doing. I definitely think we have a way better understanding of what Coach McCaffery wants."

Perhaps the other key when it comes to confidence is that of May, a player McCaffery admitted wasn't the same after suffering a groin injury that kept him on the bench for Iowa's contest back on Jan. 4 against Ohio State.

Since last season's conclusion, however, McCaffery has called May's improvement from then to now "phenomenal." May believes the adversity he went through, combined with the work he put

in over the last seven months, has made him more mature, and, more confident.

“There were a lot of frustrating points, frustrating moments,” May said. “I’ve learned from those. It has given me the opportunity to figure out what I can do to not let it happen again, and it won’t happen this year.”

Finally, there’s the role of the new facilities put in place at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, giving the players more available access than before. With new practice courts, a new strength and conditioning room, and being allowed to stay around until midnight on any given night, the players now find themselves in the gym more than ever before.

“You look at Matt Gatens, Matt is now coming in 4-5 times a week on his own, in addition to the time that we require for him to be here,” McCaffery said. “It makes it really convenient for these guys to work into their own schedule, when they can come in and get shots done, and got a lot of shots in a relatively short period of time.”

### **Sophomores putting on weight**

McCaffery made mention Thursday of how all three of his sophomores – Basabe, Devyn Marble, and Zach McCabe – had all put on weight. Marble now comes in at 197 pounds after being listed last season at 190. Meanwhile, Basabe and McCabe both went from 215 each to 234 and 239, respectively. McCaffery also added that McCabe’s amount of body fat went down while putting on the additional 24 pounds.

“We had a meeting after the spring, and he just told me that he wanted me to gain more weight and just be stronger,” McCabe said, alluding to a conversation he had with McCaffery after last season.

McCabe’s additional mass likely means he’ll be more suited to play inside at the 4-spot, spelling Basabe, or possibly even

playing the 4 with Basabe moving over to the 5 if need be, according to McCaffery. While McCabe and Marble both agree the added muscle will benefit them, they were also both in agreement saying Basabe will be the one who benefits the most.

McCaffery believes Basabe is capable of averaging a double-double this season after a freshman season that saw the Glen Cove, N.Y., native average 11 points and 6.8 rebounds while starting every game. Basabe is determined to prove his coach right, even though he admits he'll be more of a "marked man" when Iowa enters conference play.

"My expectation is just to dominate and maximize what I can do on the court," Basabe said. "Whatever number that is, that's what it's going to be. A double-double is just a standard. I know what he's talking about, and I feel the same way."

### **Freshmen finding their roles**

Iowa has a new trio of freshmen this season that all look to contribute right away. Gabe Olaseni comes in at 6-11 and looks to battle both seniors Andrew Brommer and Devon Archie for playing time. He's also continuing to get acclimated to Iowa City and to the United States, as Olaseni comes to Iowa from England, by way of Sunrise Christian Academy in Bel Aire, Kan.

Olaseni said the cultural adjustment was easier because English was already his native tongue, and that teammates and coaches have provided plenty of help with the basketball side of things.

"I went to Coach McCaffery's house a few times, had dinner with him and his family," Olaseni said. "Just from listening to him talk, I learned a lot, just by having simple conversations with him."

Iowa also welcomes in Josh Oglesby, a 6-5 guard originally from Cedar Rapids. Oglesby will likely play the 2-guard than anything else, but he said the coaches have talked with him

about playing some back-up point, which would allow Marble to play more out on the wing.

"I've played the point a couple of times and Coach McCaffery says I'm going to have to play the point a couple of times," Oglesby said. "Marble has been really impressive lately. He has been getting to the hole better. He's going to do great things at the wing, so [McCaffery] doesn't want Devyn at the point much.

"Whatever role I have to do, I'll do it. Hopefully, I'll do it well."

Perhaps the most highly-touted and most-ready of these freshmen, however, is forward Aaron White, who left an impact during the Prime Time League this summer where he made a game-winning lay-up as time expired in the league's championship.

Over the past three months, White said his primary focus has been working on ball-handling. To aid him with this, he said he had been studying a lot of Pete Maravich and how the legendary guard would handle the ball.

"A lot of the stuff he did, a lot of the drills he did, I've been trying to incorporate coming up here," White said, who added the other main focus he has in recent months is getting his shot up.

### **Bobbleheads are back**

Last season, Iowa had Bobblehead giveaways at a pair of games last season – one with the likeness of McCaffery, the other of former center Jarryd Cole.

This season, five of the Hawkeyes' home games will have a Bobblehead promotion – McCaffery, and each of the four seniors: Brommer, Cartwright, Archie and Gatens. The first of these games will be Nov. 14, when an Andrew Brommer Bobblehead will be given out to fans attending Iowa's game that evening

against North Carolina A&T.

“Brommer has the funniest one, I think, because of the hair on his bald head,” said Archie, who will have his Bobblehead night when Iowa plays Central Arkansas on Dec. 19.

Brommer said all four seniors got to see the designs first-hand and he liked what he saw. Cartwright, however, said the original replica of his Bobblehead made him laugh to the point changes needed to be made.

“It looks better,” Cartwright said after changes were made to his, which will be given out at Iowa’s game against Clemson on Nov. 29. “The one I have is more my skin tone and everything.”

McCaffery’s Bobblehead makes its return Feb. 1 when Iowa plays Minnesota, while Gatens’ Bobblehead will be the promotion on Feb. 23 when the Hawkeyes play host to Wisconsin.

[10/13/2011 – Fran McCaffery press conference transcript \(Source: UI Sports Info.\)](#)

**AUDIO:**

[Matt Gatens](#)

[Eric May](#)

[Andrew Brommer](#)

[Devon Archie](#)

[Gabe Olaseni](#)

[Josh Oglesby](#)

[Aaron White](#)

[Devyn Marble](#)

[Zach McCabe](#)

Melsahn Basabe

Bryce Cartwright