

# 11/3/2011: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Thursday prior to the Hawkeyes' exhibition game on Nov. 6 against Northwest Missouri State at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

## **Opening statement:**

*"Sorry about yesterday. That was my screw-up. I took off. I had a day off, and I think you can appreciate where I'm coming from. I don't always remember stuff like this because when I get into the season, I'm thinking about two things: How to get our team better, and recruiting. There was a workout that we weren't sure was going to take place, and once I knew that it was, I just took off. So that's where I was."*

## **On what he sees as the rotation coming off the bench:**

*"Well, the thing that we do is we have a number of options. You know, [Devyn] Marble is going to be a key guy off the bench, without question, as will [Zach] McCabe, for sure. He has played extremely well. I think [Josh] Oglesby and Aaron White have been spectacular. So there's nine. I've got the ability then to bring Marble in as either a back-up 1, or to replace Matt [Gatens], or to replace Eric [May]. So I've got a lot of ways that I can go."*

*"The other thing is I think [Gabe] Olaseni is ready to give us*

*some minutes as well. I don't know if anybody was really counting on him, but we were. He has been our top rebounder from the first day of practice, whereas last year, I think it was a little bit more streamlined in terms of who was playing. We really have 10 guys, right now, that are ready to play legitimately, and [Andrew] Brommer will be when he gets healthier."*

**On whether he thinks he'll go 11-deep once Brommer does return from his sprained knee:**

*"You know, the one thing is I've never done that. I think if you were to study most teams, very few coaches play 11 players. We have 11 scholarship players, and I feel very comfortable playing all of them. A lot of times you end up redshirting somebody, or somebody's banged up at any particular point in time. But what we have right now are 11, well 10, right this as we speak, there's 10 that deserve to play. They've played well enough."*

*"They understand the system. They've produced in the past, or have come in as freshmen and competed hard and pick things up relatively quickly. So I think in many respects, it's an exciting situation to be in because we do have depth, we do have versatility, and we can play the way that I want to play as a result."*

**On Devon Archie's progress and what happens at the 5 when Brommer returns from his knee injury:**

*"Well, I don't know what it's going to be like when [Brommer] comes back. It's going to really depend on how mobile he is and how explosive he is, and what kind of shape he's in. He's working hard and doing pool workouts, and things like that. So I think his weight and his lung capacity, all of those things, seem to be O.K."*

*"Archie, he has been rock solid. He has been rebounding the ball, he's a tremendous passer, he's running the floor, he's*

blocking some shots. You know, he doesn't play outside of himself. He's not doing a tremendous amount of dribbling or shooting. He just screens and simplifies our offense, and now in Year Two, he knows what I want from him. I'm excited about him. I'm happy for him. People have given up on him, I think, and he just believed in himself and kept fighting, and here he is in a position to have a really nice senior year."

**On the NCAA recruiting changes approved last week that will be implemented next year:**

"Well, I think it's a good move because we've got a change in generation. More kids text than seem to want to talk on the phone, and I think you can communicate simply that way. I do think it can be problematic for some kids that are really getting a lot of attention. But I do think what will happen is, it will become as it grows really quickly, if you're having conversations, the kid's interested, and if you're not, he's not interested for whatever reason.

"But to not have to record it and worry, 'Did I call this kid,' or 'Did Andrew [Francis] call him yesterday,' and 'Do we have a call this week,' there's times that you want to communicate with your recruits once you sort of settle into who your key guys are. If they're interested in you and you're interested in them, you'd like to be able to, not harass them, but just have continuous legitimate conversation, especially when it makes sense.

"There will be some coaches and some schools that will go overboard, calling kids 3, 4, 5 times a day, and that's why they put the rule in in the first place. Those individuals will have to set the parameters themselves to not be harassed in a way that precludes them from making the kind of academic and athletic progress that they want to make. Ultimately, it's going to be a function of, 'Does the kid want to talk to you or not?' If he wants to, he'll talk to you. If he doesn't, if it's not a good time, then he won't.

*"But what it will also do is, I remember back in the old days when we weren't limited on phone calls and we'd have more conversation with parents. You know, a lot of times now if you're limited to one call or two calls, the tendency is to call the prospect's cell number. In the past, you might get to know the prospect's brother or his sister because you're calling the house, and then you know all of his family members. So I think when it's all said and done, it will be a better way to develop relationships."*

**On restoring April weekends, but losing July weekends for recruiting:**

*"I think all in all, I'm not excited about losing four days, because I think giving us four days back in April is a brilliant move. Four days in April will really help us because what it will do is we'll be able to see some players that we're having conversations with and be able to have more legitimate conversations with, 'Are we offering? Are we not offering?' at that time."*

*"A lot of times, you're expressing interest because of something you heard or because of something they did, but not because of something you saw. So we'll be able to get out and we'll be able to watch some players. Obviously, others we would have seen already we would have offered. I think it makes us better capable of making a solid assessment and eliminates mistakes down the road. I don't think July had to be 20 days, but I would have liked for it to have been more than 12. But I understand why they went to 12, and we'll be able to get it done in 12."*

**On Olaseni and whether any decision to redshirt him might have been impacted by Brommer's injury or Olaseni's progress:**

*"No, we're not redshirting Gabe. I think that's safe to say. He has played his way. I mean, he is far and away the leading rebounder on this team from the first day of practice. You can*

say, 'Well, we could redshirt him because we have two seniors,' but obviously, Andrew has been hurt, and Archie has had a little bit of problems with his shin in the past. It has been hurting him in the last couple of days. The bottom line is in this league, you need big guys that can get in there and rebound and impact the game in the post. He is ready to help us."

**On whether he feels the team is further along now in Year Two with schemes and other things he wants to do:**

"Absolutely. I think it's only logical. We just want to move quicker, and the time to teach every drill, every concept, every play, it just takes a long time in Year One. There's no way around it. The terminology is different. So now, I'm re-teaching to experienced players and I'm only teaching the new stuff to the young guys. Fortunately, we have a group of freshmen who are intelligent and are skilled. For Gabe, it's a little bit of a larger learning curve because of the fact that he hasn't played as much basketball as Aaron or Josh. But he's bright and he's conscientious.

"When you have smart people that want to work, and want to listen, and come in to watch film, and come in and have meetings, then you're moving quicker. We've gotten a lot of stuff in, and more importantly, it's one thing to get it in, it's another thing to be executing properly. We're executing much better."

**On whether it's too early to have unlimited contact with prospects when they're high school sophomores:**

"Absolutely not. Absolutely not, and I think what will happen is you start to develop a relationship, and then you kind of see where you are. I think it will become crystal clear – Are you in, or are you out? Are you in, or are you on the fringes? – just because of how you're being responded to. Most kids are polite, but after awhile, they're really only going to have

*time to talk to the people they have genuine interest in. It may actually really improve the process. It maybe may not at first, but I think eventually, it will improve the process."*

**On whether kids that age are ready from a maturity standpoint:**

*"I think they almost expect it. You know, especially for the ones at this level. The other side of it is, like for example, I'm recruiting one sophomore who at the start of this year was still 14 years old, and there's another one who's 17 years old. The varied age range per class is different than what it used to be. So you might lock into some sophomores that are physically more mature, and we as a staff can't dilute ourselves into thinking there aren't other sophomores out there that will develop later.*

*"We can't just lock into the guys who are good enough at 15. We got to look at the guys that are going to develop and get stronger, and get bigger, and grow into their feet, grow into their bodies. Who are they being coached by, and what teams are they on in the summer? Are they going to be taught something, and are they going to eventually be better than those guys that right now, are guys that they aren't better than?"*

**On whether there's anyone else in addition to Marble that could be the back-up at point:**

*"Marble's the guy, without question. We've got Branden Stubbs ready. He has had a good fall, without question. Oglesby and Gatens can get the ball up and handle the ball if we need them to."*

**On Brommer's status for the exhibition:**

*"He will not. He's at least a week out, maybe a week-and-a-half."*

**On whether he has settled on team captains and what plays into**

**that decision if he has:**

*"To be truthful, I haven't really thought about it that much. I mean obviously, Matt is a returning captain. He has done a fabulous job, and I'm sure Bryce [Cartwright] will be a captain. I haven't really made any final decision. The reality is your leaders are your leaders. I mean, for us, we've got two senior guards who are both going to be in the starting lineup, and we're going to follow those guys.*

*"I think the one guy that, to me, has made really unbelievable strides in terms of pretty much everything is Eric May. He's a guy that I think has great leadership quality. Not a big talker, but not afraid to talk. He just works so hard, and his consistency and effort and concentration is so good that he has really commanded the respect of everybody on this team, and also our young guys. I'm kind of viewing in on those three guys, in particular."*

**On whether this team can play the tempo he wants and extend the court the way he wants to:**

*"I think we can. I think we can, and if you're going to play that way, you have got to rotate personnel and there can't be a huge drop-off, because that's ultimately what happens. If as a head coach I feel like when I go to my bench there's a drop-off, if the game's close, then we tend to not go to our benches as much as we thought we would. That's just human nature.*

*"But if we have quality on that bench, and I'm not afraid to go to them, now we've got fresh bodies on the floor that are spreading the floor in transition, who are making those slides and sprinting back when the ball gets below us when we're pressing, their angles are what they should be, and they're coming off when they should and getting back when they should, and they're reading and they're long and they're active because they're not fatigued. When you talk about pressing and*

*running and using 10 bodies with media timeouts, we should be able to play at our peak performance pretty much the entire game."*

**On the importance of seeing them play somebody different:**

*"Oh, it's absolutely critical. You know, you just get so tired of going against each other and we try to rotate teams and not let the players get too caught up into who has got a black shirt, who has got a gold shirt. But you've got to go against somebody that's going to run something different, and you have to figure it out. They're going to have some good players, and how do we stop those guys? How do we sustain effort and how do we extend leads, and how do we come back if we have to? All of those things.*

*"Then you've got to put a crowd in the building, you got to keep score, you got to put the officials out there so we're not fouling as much. It's really important and I like to do it. I like the scrimmage and then the exhibition game. That's kind of why we do it that way. With the scrimmage, you get some kinks out and just work privately. Now we've got to get out in public and see where we are."*

**On what makes him believe Archie will be a more consistent player:**

*"Well, I think it's the healthiest he has been, and he hasn't been really completely healthy. Hopefully, he'll stay that way. I think he's in good shape. But I think mentally, he's a lot tougher than he has been. He feels like he belongs, and he was inconsistent last year, but he did have some good games against good players. So if you can do that some of the time, you can do that all the time. I think for most players who are in his position, they have to understand completely what they do well and what they don't do well, and then go out and play to their strengths and away from their weaknesses.*

*"You know, if he starts dribbling too much, it's a turnover.*



*If it's one power dribble to the rim, one dribble into a gap, and just get all over the glass and stay the stance and move his feet, know what the guy's flashing in front of him, he can have a great impact because he's an athlete who's long, who can block shots, and could have good feel for how to play the game. He understands how to play. Now he's not going to shoot 3's. He's not going to shoot foul-line jumpers. But he can score around the basket, so as long as he does those things, he'll be fine."*

**On what he plans to do with his one open scholarship to complement the five commitments he currently has:**

*"It really doesn't look like we're going to go on anybody else early. I would be shocked. We're not really checking anybody that hard right now. We're not on the verge, there's nobody visiting, so I think that's probably a safe bet. Then carry into the spring, we could get a transfer, we could sign somebody in the spring, or we can carry it into next year."*

**On if he has a set number of lineup combinations he wants to evaluate during the exhibition this weekend:**

*"No. We'll start the five guys that are on the sheet, and then we'll go from there. We'll rotate guys in and out, and we'll just kind of play it from there. I'm not going to say I want to put all the freshmen out there, or this combination. We'll just mix it up and see kind of what works."*

**On if Oglesby and White have met his expectations already and how he would want to use them early on:**

*"Well, it's not what I thought they would do, and what I thought they would do is a lot, and I think that's important to point out. I didn't think they would be stumbling and fumbling freshmen at this point. I recruited them to play, and they deserve to play. In a different world, they might be in the starting line-up. I mean, Josh has shot the ball as well as anybody I've ever coached, and Aaron is as versatile as any*

6-8 player I've ever had.

*"They can score, they defend, they work, they listen. They're team players. They can pass it, they're not mistake guys. They've picked the offense up, they know what we're doing and have sort of stepped in. You always hope that your freshmen that you anticipate being like this are like this. Sometimes they're not. But they have been, so they're going to play a lot, and that's because they deserve to play a lot."*

**On what determines whether that last scholarship is used in the spring or in 2013:**

*"Well, I think a couple of things. No. 1, is there just a phenomenal transfer that we just absolutely love that is an experienced guy that we think makes sense for us. No. 2, it will be a function of how this team develops, and at some point as the season goes on, you identify a need that you didn't anticipate and you just think, 'Well now, we can address the need. We have a scholarship, so we can address the need immediately than have to wait a year.'"*

**On how Melsahn Basabe has looked in practice and how he has developed since last season:**

*"Well, I think he's shooting the ball better from the perimeter, which is a big thing for him, because now we have him hitting base-line jumpers, foul-line jumpers. His assist-to-turnover ratio, which was not good last year, is something that he knew he had to address, and he actually has a positive assist-to-turnover ratio as we tally every practice. To me, that's the big thing. His mistakes are down, he's shooting the ball better, and I think his consistency and performance has been good."*

**On if Brommer could be back in time for Iowa's game against Creighton on Nov. 20:**

*"You know, he's really optimistic. He's saying a week. I'm*

looking at him and I'm saying to myself a week-and-a-half. But the reality is that he hasn't even started running yet, so let's be realistic here. I'm not going to rush him back. I think that would be the most foolish thing I could do, so maybe it's two weeks.

"To be perfectly honest with you, I've not looked at, 'O.K., let's get him back before this game.' That would be a good game. They got [Gregory] Echenique, and he's a big house. So you need your size, and your bulk. But who knows, even if he's healthy enough, whether he's going to be ready to play at that point, because he won't have practiced much."