

11/22/2011: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Tuesday prior to the Hawkeyes' game on Nov. 23 against Campbell at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

On the three sophomores using last Sunday's loss to Creighton as a learning experience given their play:

"Well, I think it's very important. We need those three guys to play better than that. I thought, honestly, Melsahn [Basabe] didn't play well. He got in a little foul trouble, but he has got to be able to break that trend. He did that last year. He'd get a little bit sideways when he got in foul trouble and not get it going again. Zach [McCabe], I thought was playing hard. He had a couple of looks right at the rim and it rimmed out on him, and I think that affected him. He missed two free throws, which he never does. Then you know [Devyn] Marble had to play a lot at the 1, and I thought he played with great energy, and I think he and Zach both played with the amount of energy that they needed to play with. But they didn't get a lot of success with going to the basket.

"So those three guys are critical to our team. They're going to play. They have character. All three of them had terrific practices [Monday]. They bounced back and showed some maturity with a great practice. They're going to back it up with another great practice and then play well Wednesday night and

then continue that on. The one thing that you tend to do is focus solely on what you didn't do, what we could've done. The truth of the matter is we lost to a really, really good team, and in some areas, we got exposed. Those areas, we need to work on, and we have time. We have some guys that will learn and grow and get better."

On what critical areas he felt his team get exposed in against Creighton:

"Well, I thought we showed a lack of maturity in the one stretch where it was 12-10. We were quick-shooting the ball, and at the same time, not getting stops. I mean, you can't do that, I wouldn't call it a road game but it wasn't a home game. You're in another building, you're playing against a top 25 team, and you're trying to get it all back at once. We have to be more mature than that. We talked about that before the game, we talked about it during timeouts, but we were just jacking them at that point, and then defensively, we were not as sharp as we needed to be, and I don't think that's completely the fault of the players. We gave them a lot to think about. It's a complicated team to prepare for.

"Like I said in the postgame, whenever you're preparing for a team, you're looking for the weaknesses, you're looking for the key personnel to focus on. But they have seven jump-shooters, they have depth and quickness in the backcourt, so they have drivers. They have two phenomenal, maybe three, really good post players, so they're going to attack your team in a lot of ways. So you can go through a lot of things that you have to remember, and we remembered a lot of it.

"But we didn't execute it the way you have to execute it to beat Creighton, and I think a lot of teams are going to have a hard time doing that because of the fact that one of the best things about that team is they have all those weapons we just talked about, but they're also an incredibly unselfish team. I think that says a lot about Mac and the job he's doing in

terms of getting those guys to buy in completely. Nobody's selfish on that team, and everybody shares the ball. They have multiple double-figure scorers in every game and a lot of guys get buckets. Hopefully, we will have learned from a team that runs a lot of different sets and different kinds of motion, because we're going to face a lot of those teams down the road."

On the health of both Bryce Cartwright and Andrew Brommer:

"Bryce was a lot better yesterday, I thought. I think the key will be how is he today. Because he was kind of in and out. I think you saw that in the game and the previous couple of days before. So he was pretty consistent I thought yesterday, and we'll see how he feels this morning when he woke up. Brommer had a great workout yesterday. He was a little bit sore. So again, we'll have to see how he is today and how hard [John] Streif wants to push him today or back him off and then figure out if he's going to play tomorrow night. But he looked good in practice yesterday."

On what he expects out of Campbell on Wednesday:

"Well I think obviously, you're talking about an undefeated team, a team that has already beaten a Conference-USA opponent, a team that beat [North Carolina] A&T, who we saw, by 30, so they've got some weapons. [Eric] Griffin's tremendous in the post. He is as long and as athletic a guy as we'll face all year long. But they've got a terrific freshman point guard. They've got an explosive, really powerful guy that can score at the 2-spot.

"So you're talking about [Darren] White, he's 6-4, 210, he's a power pack. Griffin is 6-8, lean, but powerful. Highlight-reel dunks. [Trey] Freeman is as good a freshman point guard as I've seen because not only does he get everybody involved, but he can shoot the ball. So you couple that with a lot of other athletes, and that's why they're undefeated. It is going

to be a great test for us because they're athletic, but they don't play nuts. I mean, they share the ball, they defend. They do some different things defensively, and they can score."

On whether Campbell's the type of opponent he wants to face following the loss to Creighton:

"I think it's important to play a quality opponent right now, and this is clearly a quality opponent. They've got a very good coach. I've coached against him before. He knows what he's doing, and he has got them playing. I'm familiar with this program because they're from North Carolina and I coached in North Carolina. We played them before. They've always had a quality program. They recently built a new facility and really trying to move the program forward, and you're seeing, I think, the development of this program to where it is now versus where it was five years ago, where it was 10 years ago."

On if there's more to Basabe right now than just overcoming slow starts:

"No, there's more to it. I mean, he's not playing well. He admits that, and you know, there's a lot of ways to address it, not the least of which is to just really focus and work harder. He did that yesterday, and he has been playing in spurts. We saw a little bit of that last year, but we saw phenomenal performances consistently. Then we saw some off games where he'd get into a funk early, get in foul trouble. Even the Michigan State game, he wasn't in foul trouble, he just got off to a bad start and just couldn't get right."

"What we have to do with him is just keep coaching him. He's a terrific young man. He has got character. He gets emotional at times, and what he has to do is re-focus and get back to doing what he does well. I think in some respects, obviously he wants to expand his game. He wants to do more things."

Everybody does that. But sometimes in trying to do those things, and work on those things, you forget about doing the things that you've always done well.

"For him, he's not rebounding. He has always been a, not a good rebounder, but a great rebounder. He has got to get back to getting 5-6 offensive rebounds every night and being a 10, 11, 12 rebounds every night. When he does that, he'll have some putbacks, then he'll get fouled more, and then his point numbers will go up. And then I do think he has improved his mid-range jump shot. There's no question about that. I've encouraged him to shoot that. I want him to shoot that. I want teams to respect him from there.

"But in the post, I think he's getting a little bit too fancy and he's trying to make too many moves. He was always a get-it-and-go guy because he's explosive and he's long. I'd like to see him do a little bit more of that. You know, in many respects, it's back to the basics with him. Like I said, he's a good person and he'll get it figured out. We'll get it figured out with him, and he'll be better."

On whether having freshmen lead in scoring in three of the first four games could be a good or bad thing:

"I think it's a good thing. I said we miss Jarryd Cole a lot than I think many people thought we would. You look at his numbers and say, 'Well, seven and six or six and five,' whatever it was. He was a glue guy who could defend the post, and he was quick. We've got to replace sort of that enforcer in the post and a guy who can explode at any time. So we're looking for this in Aaron White, in Devon Archie, in Zach McCabe. We get Gabe [Olaseni] some minutes. Obviously, I we'd love for Brommer to have been in that mix. I think he has looked phenomenal in the practices that we've had with him, but they've been so limited, and he gives us something that we don't have from those other guys, as good as they are.

"I don't think it's to be unexpected that you'd have that, and I've said Josh [Oglesby] is special and I think Aaron White's special. Those guys, they're going to score. Now what we've got to get Aaron doing is play a little bit more defense and do a little bit more rebounding because if he's going to be that other guy, then he has got to rebound more, otherwise we need to continue to have Archie and Brommer in that spot and leave Mel at the 4-spot."

On what he has seen from Oglesby over the past week:

"I'm seeing everything that I saw for three weeks before that. You know, he just got out of the gate a little bit slow and missed a couple of shots early. But he's just doing what he has always done. I'm not seeing anything special. I kind of expect that from him. I mean, he has got NBA range, he's a terrific passer, he handles the ball well, he's not a mistake guy, and he's battling on defense. I mean, he'll guard you."

"He might run into somebody that's more powerful right now because he's just a freshman, but he has worked on his body, he moves his feet, he's smart. He has been coached. He grew up playing for a coach, you know his dad was a coach, so he knows what to do out there. He might miss some shots, but he doesn't play like a freshman."

On the approach he took following the Creighton loss – just forget it and move on, or use it to teach lessons:

"No, you have to focus on what happened. When you have a day like that, you sort of break everything down. O.K., what did we do as coaches in terms of preparation that we would do differently now? I mean, you break every aspect of it down. Did we spend too much time on film? Did we spend too much time on them? Should we spend more time on us? Should we spend more time individually? You talk about how many meetings we had. All of those things, and how much we gave them."

"And then you talk to them about honestly evaluating each of

themselves and being honest. I will do that. I will discuss each person and how I felt they played directly. I have a very direct approach. I mean, I'm honest with them. When they're great, I'm honest with them. When they're not so great, I'm honest with them. That's my responsibility, because as good as Aaron White looked at times on offense, defensively he was not what he should be. He needs to be told that, and we need to work with him and help him get better. He hasn't played that many games. I'm not mad at him, but if he's going to be the player that he can be, you've got to complete the picture. Melsahn, O.K., we've got to focus on some different issues individually.

"And then you look at effort. Who gave us the kind of effort that we needed? Did we play with the kind of effort that we thought we needed? I'm not sure we did at times. You know, I thought we got a little bit sideways when they started hitting those 3s. It tends to demoralize you a little bit when they're whacking them from everywhere with different guys, but it's not like we didn't know that there was the potential for that to happen. You watch different games, you watch different guys making shots all the time, and there were some things that we said we were going to do that we didn't do, and that's of concern because you've got to go in and carry out the game plan.

"Sometimes the game plan doesn't work. Sometimes you don't carry it out. Sometimes it's a combination of both, and as the game goes on, you've got to make adjustments based on what they're doing. We did that, and I thought we did a pretty good job of that. We made some adjustments and the kids did a pretty good job on the fly. But there were some things in the game plan that we didn't execute that we've got to do a better job of.

"You know, it's the kind of atmosphere that we're going to face on a regular basis. We still have a lot of young guys playing, and I thought Gatens was really good. I thought Eric

May battled his tail off. He didn't have a great game statistically, but I thought he was really out there battling. That's why I left those two guys in there most of the time. I thought they were really locked into the game, and you would expect that from a senior and a junior. It's not something you brush off by any means. You've got to break it down, piece by piece, player by player, and then try to get better."

On if he felt things spun out of control when Cartwright had to leave the game against Creighton:

"I think it did. It was one of those things where he didn't feel well two days before the game, so we didn't know what was up. So he came to practice the day before the game and they said, 'O.K., he's not allowed to practice.' So they didn't let him practice, but said, 'We think he might be able to play.' So it was kind of a game-time decision. So he was playing. I think he was doing fine, and I took him out because he was tired and then someone came up to me and said he was in the locker room. So I'm like, 'O.K., I kind of know why he's in the locker room.' But I wasn't really expecting him to come back, and they said, 'No, you can put him back in,' so I put him back in.

"I thought he did really well, and I told Marble at the time, I said, 'Dev, I don't think Bryce is coming back. You're going to have to get us home now.' I think what they did was they really cranked up the heat. Not necessarily full-court, but they were really up into us when Devyn was bringing it down and when Branden Stubbs would bring it down, who I thought did fine when I put him in. I mean, you just got to go to your next guy, not knowing what's going to happen with Bryce.

"So yeah, we got a little bit sideways, but we've got to be able to play because there's going to be times when he might get hurt. If you remember last year in the Purdue game, he had cramps, and Marble was terrific. It's all part of the growth process, I guess."