

11/28/2011: Iowa men's basketball notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game against Clemson with the local media during his press conference on Monday, Nov. 28, 2011, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City.

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Confidence was a heavy topic of conversation during Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery's press conference Monday at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

The Hawkeyes are coming off an 82-72 win over IPFW over the weekend, but that win followed a two-game losing streak where Iowa was embarrassed by both Creighton and Campbell. But with Clemson coming to town for Tuesday's Big Ten/ACC Challenge tilt, a win could potentially go a long way for this Hawkeye squad, who enters with a 4-2 overall mark.

"It could help for sure," senior guard Matt Gatens said. "I don't know how much, but beating a high-quality ACC team like

that is definitely going to boost our confidence.

“All of these games matter, and this would be a high quality win for us.”

The Tigers come to Iowa City with a 3-2 record that features losses to Coastal Carolina and College of Charleston. However, Clemson has also made four straight NCAA tournaments, including a second-round exit by West Virginia last season in what was Brad Brownell’s first year taking over for Oliver Purnell.

Clemson features three players currently averaging double-figures scoring in guard Andre Young and forward Milton Jennings and Devin Booker, and guard Tanner Smith currently leads the Tigers in assists in 21 through five games. In addition, Clemson also has a duo of freshmen guards in T.J. Sapp and Rod Hall who have split time as starters this season.

“They’ve got the freshmen who are really talented, very athletic, play hard,” McCaffery said. “But you’ve got the four upperclassmen that are kind of doing what they’re supposed to be doing, and I think that’s why they’ve got a good club.”

Getting Basabe’s groove back

One player McCaffery would really like to get going Tuesday night is sophomore forward Melsahn Basabe, who statistically has been a season-long slump. The Glen Cove, N.Y., native enters Tuesday’s contest against Clemson averaging just 7.2 points and 4.5 rebounds per game. The last three games, Basabe has scored exactly two points in each game and in all three occurrences had to deal with foul trouble.

Against IPFW, Basabe picked up two quick fouls within the game’s first two minutes.

With that being said, McCaffery isn’t noticing a lack of effort from his 6-7 forward, who bulked up to 234 pounds at

the start of the season after playing around 210-215 pounds as a freshman last year.

"I do think he is thinking a little bit too much," McCaffery said. "He's trying to make too many moves. He's putting the ball on the deck more than he should."

"But he has practiced well, so I know that he's capable of getting back to where he needs to be."

To his credit, Basabe hasn't made any excuses for any of the poor play he has had so far this season. Given the caliber of a team such as Clemson, he said he knows what will be expected of him going forward and vows to continue battling until he has the numbers many became accustomed to seeing him post last season.

"I'm not going to tell myself that I should be doing anything but just playing with energy I played with last year, and I think everything will fall into place," Basabe said. "I'm not worried about anything. I've been coming to practice and working hard, so I know I'll start playing well."

Cartwright counted on to engineer

Senior guard Bryce Cartwright revealed Monday that he had been suffering from concussion-like symptoms recently, which may have a strong correlation with the early-season struggles he had. The 6-1 point guard did bounce back against IPFW, scoring 12 points and dishing out five assists.

One of the benefits of having him play as effectively as he did last weekend was it allowed McCaffery to pair him and sophomore guard Devyn Marble together on the court, which lets Marble play at the wing as opposed to just spelling Cartwright at the point.

"I think it's still a process," Cartwright said. "We still got a few things to work out, but I think with time, it's going to

get better.”

With Cartwright back at full-go from what McCaffery called “a 10-12 day funk,” the head coach will continue to count on him more than ever before.

“He wasn’t his normal aggressive self,” McCaffery said. “What we’ve tried to encourage him to do is be more aggressive, be an attack player. That’s who you are.

“Everything we run has space that allows him to go and to break the play off and to go make a play if they’re overplaying a certain player.”

Also of note, Tuesday’s game against Clemson will have the Bryce Cartwright Bobblehead Night promotion. It’s the second of four Bobblehead promotions Iowa has planned this season. The first was senior forward Andrew Brommer, who had his Bobblehead night Nov. 14 for the Hawkeyes’ 95-79 win over North Carolina A&T.

Injury update

McCaffery confirmed Monday that senior forward Devon Archie would return to action for Tuesday’s game against Clemson after spraining his wrist Nov. 23 against Campbell. The wrist injury is what kept him out of Iowa’s win over IPFW, and Archie was replaced by sophomore forward Zach McCabe in the starting lineup. McCabe will remain in the starting lineup Tuesday.

“He was hurting big time,” McCaffery said. “I guess he went for a loose ball or went for a steal and landed on his wrist. Showed up for practice on Thanksgiving and was swollen pretty good.

“He had a good workout [Sunday], so he should be O.K. unless he tweaks it again, which hopefully he won’t.”