

# 12/2/2011: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Friday prior to the Hawkeyes' game on Dec. 3 against Brown at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

**On what the tone in practice has been since the loss to Clemson on Nov. 29:**

*"Well, we had a day off after the game. We had, I think, 13 straight practice days going into the Clemson game and we had a day off. Yesterday's practice was very good."*

**On the impact Josh Oglesby has had in the first seven games:**

*"Well, you know, he has obviously been phenomenal. For a guy that started slow the first two games to be shooting the number that he's shooting is pretty incredible. But the thing about him is he's not just a shooter. He doesn't make mistakes. He can pass the ball, and his size enables him to be a quality defender. You know, he just really understands how to play."*

*"It will really take a lot of the pressure off of [Matt] Gatens, I think, most specifically because clearly when Clemson came in here, their game plan was just to get up on Matt, so Josh gives us another scorer alongside of him. I think what it does is it bodes well for the future because I think as well as he's playing now, he just looks to be getting*

*better."*

**On whether getting momentum at one end of the floor will help more at the other end:**

*"Oh, I don't think there's any question about that. You know, when you're struggling shooting the ball like we were in the Clemson game, and the same exact thing happened in the Creighton game, it definitely affected us defensively. What we have to be is mentally tougher to overcome shooting struggles at any particular point in time in the game, and make sure that you get the stops you need at that critical moment in the game. So I think when you look at it, we have to manage the game better."*

*"Because if you remember, the game was 8-8, 10-8, and then all of a sudden, you look up and we're down 11. Of course it was because we couldn't score, but at the same time, they were scoring. Our transition defense broke down the one time, and then the other time we gave up penetration, then the other time we broke down in our ball screen. So we have to make sure that those things don't happen, so if you're struggling, you're still within four or six. You're not down 11. It doesn't get to 13. Because teams tend to shoot the ball better when they have a lead, and you've got to keep it tight and keep the defensive intensity going."*

*"One leads to the other, but at the same time, the one thing you can consistently control is the defensive end of the floor. That, you can do, and we're not doing that right now. That's what we've been working on."*

**On whether he intends to start Oglesby on Saturday as he hinted he might after the Clemson loss:**

*"I have not talked to him about it yet. It's something that you know is being considered obviously. But we haven't made the move yet."*

**On the statuses of Devyn Marble and Devon Archie, both of whom left the Clemson game with injuries:**

*"Archie's wrist, he did something to it again, so he did not practice yesterday. He's taped up pretty good, but I don't know how effective he's going to be, quite frankly. Marble is a little sore, but he can play, and he will play."*

**On whether starting Oglesby could boost his confidence and allow Eric May to be more relaxed coming off the bench:**

*"Well, I think that's the best way to look at it, quite frankly. Because a lot of times, you know, I think from the outside, people want to look and see, 'It makes sense. Josh is playing well. Eric is struggling a little bit. Just make the move.' But you have to look at the big picture and figure out, 'O.K., is that going to be the best thing for Josh? Is that going to be the best thing for Eric? Is that going to be the best thing for our team?'"*

*"If you can come to grips with answering those questions, because I don't want to put Josh in the starting lineup if it's going to negatively affect Eric, because Josh is fine coming off the bench, and Eric has been effective as a starter at times. He just hasn't been effective recently. So those are the things that we're trying to think through as a staff, and then we'll have conversations with the players involved, and then we'll go one way or the other."*

**On how he finds the balance making a lineup change without damaging the psyche of the player getting benched:**

*"Well, I think the important thing is you hope that when you have discussions like that, that all parties buy in. If a guy thinks he's getting yanked out of the lineup unfairly, it's never going to work. If you think that while it may appear that the best thing to do is put a guy into the starting lineup, yet it will affect the effectiveness that we have coming off the bench, then that might not be a good move. So*

*I'm often times a little more reluctant to make lineup switches than maybe some other coaches would be.*

*"I think the one thing that clearly is evident is that Josh Oglesby needs to play, needs to play a lot, and one way to get him minutes is to put him into the starting lineup. But again, his conditioning has to be considered and Eric's conditioning, I feel like, and those two in particular. But there could be other changes we make, quite frankly. But probably not. That would probably be the only one that I would make at the present time if I was going to make it at all, and I'm hopeful that ultimately the collective effect is something positive, and not just making changes to make change."*

**On what the focus has been on during practices leading up to Saturday's game against Brown:**

*"Well, what we did yesterday was we watched a lot of film because as I said, the day after the game was an off-day. So we broke the Clemson game down. We made a lot of teaching points, then we'd go out and address those things in practice. We pretty much worked on everything. It was a long day, it was a long workout.*

*"We worked on pretty much all aspects of our defense, all aspects of our offense, and then stressed individual improvement in the areas where guys were struggling, and I thought the effort and focus was very good. I thought it was a good day. Now what we have to do is have another good day today, another good day tomorrow and try to string those days back-to-back. We've had good days, but we've had bad days. We've got to be more consistent."*

**On the defensive play from Melsahn Basabe and whether it's not being in the right position or effort:**

*"I don't think it's an effort issue. I think he's trying. You know, he's not reacting maybe like he should at times. But I think for him, he has got to have a little bit of success. I*

*thought the other night when he made the great blocked shot and filled the lane and got the ball in the post and got fouled, I thought, you know, this is where he's on his way. He missed a couple jumpers and he fumbled it the one time under the basket.*

*"If he gets a couple of things to go in, and gets another block, and gets some traffic rebounds, I thought yesterday in practice, rebounding-wise, he was the best he has been. For him, I think that's going to be important, and it's certainly going to be important for us because he hasn't been scoring like we've seen, but he also hasn't been rebounding like we've seen. He is really putting in the time and the effort to get it all corrected."*

**On the play of Zach McCabe since becoming a starter and how he has grown from last year to now:**

*"Well, I think you can argue that he has been our, along with Matt Gatens, most consistent player. I think you look at his rebounding numbers, he's not making mistakes, he's scoring baskets. He provides a toughness factor. He brings a certain skill set that we need at that position. I've been really pleased with Zach, and I thought that he had those qualities that would get him to where he is now, and that's clearly a much improved player."*

**On whether he focuses more on what Basabe has done well when looking at getting him more success:**

*"There's always going to be a balance. One thing that I'll always be is I'll be honest. If a kid is struggling, nobody knows it more than him. So you don't pretend like that's not the case. You address what factors may be entering into why he's struggling. You know, there are some other things that I think are in play here. I don't think he's getting the ball enough. I don't think he's getting the ball in positions where he can do anything with it, so while I think a lot of it is a*

struggle on his part, you know, we're not getting the kind of point guard play that we need to get him to be more effective. So we're also addressing those issues with Bryce Cartwright and with Devyn Marble.

"It's always a little more complicated then, 'O.K., Melsahn's not playing well. Let's get him going.' There's a lot of other factors involved. When we're doing teaching points, we make teaching points for both of those guys. There was a number of times he was open and did not get the ball. Now if he had gotten the ball and gotten the ball in a timely manner, he might've had 12 points. Then maybe his energy level is different and maybe he gets eight rebounds and we're not having this conversation.

"But it's not all that, either. I mean, let's be realistic here. It's not all he's not getting the ball. He's not going after those rebounds with two hands like he used to get in traffic, but he did that yesterday and he has been doing that in practice. He has just got to transfer it to the floor."

**On what he sees being the biggest challenge facing Brown after scouting it on film:**

"Well, Brown is a very well-coached team. They have really good shooters, and when you play a team that has that many shooters and are capable, for example, the other night they beat Rhode Island and made 10 3s. They're a team that's capable of making 14-15 3s. They're that good shooting the basketball. They're also not a mistake team.

"So you say a lot of times, 'Well, they've got a lot of shooters. Get up and press them. They'll cough it up and that's that.' Well, everybody presses them and they're not a turnover team. They're not a mistake team. They're a smart, crafty team that runs effective offense with spacing, so it's going to take tremendous effort defensively on a consistent basis, and I think that's quite frankly been one of our

*biggest problems.*

*"We play defense, at times, very well. We have not been consistently a good defensive team at all because we haven't sustained it. So that's what we're going to have to do to beat Brown. You have to sustain defensive effort, concentration, and execution, and I think in addition to that, our offense will be that much better because when you're getting stops, it's a lot better offensively than it is when you're giving up buckets, trying to run on makes."*

**On if he feels more challenged as a coach right now than he has ever been:**

*"I have been in this situation a couple of other times, and the encouraging thing for me here is we have better players here than we had when I had my struggles. But that said, we're playing teams with better players than we were playing then, so it's all relative. I appreciate [LaPhonso Ellis]'s remarks and we obviously are very close, but it is definitely a challenge. He's right.*

*"I mean, it has been a challenge for me. It has been a challenge certainly since the start of this year, more specifically the last four games, three of which we lost. But I think I am pretty good at this. You know, I have experience in this. I think I understand the good as well and have experience. We all have teams that for whatever reason, they weren't clicking, weren't doing the things that quite frankly we did last year. I mean, not that we were a Final Four team, but you know, I think even in defeat, we were better last year than we're playing this year in defeat. That's obviously a big concern.*

*"You look at individuals and you look at the collective group, and then you try to keep making, not radical changes, you try to make mud. You try to make moderate changes with individuals, and then you might make slight changes with the*

group. You might do different things in practice with regard to going first team against second team, between going first and second team against the scout team, you know, things of that nature. You talk about scouting reports and how thorough, how much time you spend versus how much time you spend with an individual person and his own psyche.

"I think what I do and I think my biggest strength is I understand each individual person and what makes them tick and then in fact, they are different. I've worked with coaches that treat people all the same and, 'At 3 o'clock, you're mine. We're going to work you. We're going to drill you. Everybody's the same.'

"Well, everybody's not the same. Everybody's different. Everybody has different things going on in their life and different things that happen in their life that make them who they are, and it's incumbent upon me then to figure that out and get to them the best way possible, whether it be to motivate with a lot of screaming and yelling, or with a lot more patting on the rear, arms around them, bench them, let them play through it, and you're not always right even then. But I think at least if they know that we're trying as a staff and I'm trying as a head coach to effect change in a positive way, then they'll keep working to effect change in a positive way on their end."

**On starting the second half against Clemson with a play for Basabe and if that's what he'll do to get his confidence back up:**

"Well, I think in that case, it was that, but it was two-fold. We wanted to get him going, but we also wanted to establish a level of inside play. We needed a post presence. I thought we were shooting a few too many jumpers, so I think it was two-fold there."

**On how much opponents shooting high-percentage from 3 is a**



**tribute to them and how much is a result of poor perimeter defense:**

*"Well, it's definitely both. I mean we have played Creighton, who is as good a 3-point shooting team as there is in the country. I think Brown is a very good 3-point shooting team. The other two teams, Campbell and IPFW, had some good shooters and I thought shot good shots. And Clemson, of course, is a good 3-point shooting team.*

*"When you look at what would be upsetting, for example, the one guy we marked as a 3-point shooter for Clemson was [Andre] Young, and we didn't match up to him. We ran two guys at one, and he was out in shooting range and he drains a 3. Or I think it was [T.J.] Sapp that time. The two guys we marked were Sapp and Young, and I think that's disappointing. So that's a concentration thing. That's a breakdown area that we have to get corrected.*

*"Now you're talking about Brown, who has multiple 3-point shooters. Creighton had multiple 3-point shooters. Now they're harder to guard because they're going to spread you out a little bit more. But it's a matter of understanding who does what and having the determination to see they don't get those shots from those areas. Now you might still lose the game, but you at least have to take away what you already know that they do well and from where they do it. I think that will be the challenge for us on Saturday."*

**On whether Andrew Brommer is completely healthy and expected to play more minutes:**

*"He's getting close. He's not 100 percent by any means, and I think you can see him. I think he has a little bit more explosion in there, and I think he'll get better as he gets in better condition. We have to watch him in practice because we need him in games. We don't need to overuse him in practice, but he also needs the time in practice to get ready for games,*

so it's a fine line there.

"But first and foremost, we got to make sure that his knee is stable and we don't want to overtax that at this point. I'm hopeful that over time, his stamina improves, his strength improves, and I think you'll see even more effectiveness. But I think clearly he's an important part of what we're trying to do."

**On if he has a set number of touches he would like Basabe to get in a game:**

"No, I don't know about that. No, I don't think you can expect that. If he's busting his tail down the floor and he's posting up and he's open, he has got to get the ball. There's going to be times when he's running around and he's screening and popping and he's posting, and it's not easy to get him. There's a guy on the high side, there's a guy on the low side. There's heavy ball pressure. Well, you can't give it to him then.

"It's an understanding that our perimeter people have to have, and whoever is on the perimeter, not just perimeter players, whoever has the ball on the perimeter, you've got to look in there. If he's posting and he's open, he has got to get the ball. If not, you move it on and you keep running your offense and maybe he gets it later. But maybe he doesn't. Then he has to go get it off the glass. But the reality is if you want your big guys to run and you want them to offensive rebound, you better throw them the ball."

**On if it took him a while to convince himself on offering Oglesby a scholarship the first time he saw him:**

"Well, when I first met him, you can't help but like him. You know, I think that was important. I mean, he was one of the first guys we had on campus. We brought him in for the spring football game, and that was shortly after I was hired. I don't exactly. A couple weeks maybe. So we brought him in and I met

he and his parents and his coach. Just delightful people. I said, 'This is a guy I'd like to have on my team.' I went to watch him work out, and he shot it really well. It was not a scrimmage workout. It was a shooting workout. Well, I've seen very few guys shoot the ball like that.

"I did not offer him on the spot because I wanted to see what kind of game he had, so when I watched him in July with the Barnstormers, he was impressive. They won the tournament up in Milwaukee, and what we were trying to figure out is compare him to a couple of other players that we were looking at. Then we watched him at a tournament in Vegas, and it was evident that he's just one of the best players at that position in the country. There wasn't any doubt in my mind, and that's when we put the offer on the table.

"Fortunately for him, I think he recognized that we got here in essentially April and initiated the recruiting process, but at the same time, didn't offer until July. What I said to him was, 'I need to evaluate your game. I know you can shoot the ball. Now, I could have brought you in here as a shooter, as a zone-buster, as a one-dimensional player.' But I wasn't recruiting that. I was recruiting a guy that I thought could be an all-Big Ten player and be one of the best basketball players in the United States, and that's what I saw as I had a chance to watch him.

"I mean, if you think about it, everybody today, and I'm not saying Josh fell into this category because he clearly didn't, but everybody wants an offer immediately. "Are you offering?" I mean, we get that question now more than we've ever got it before, and in his case, I said I wanted to take my time to evaluate you and compare you to other people. What ended up happening was he was at the top of the list, and he earned his way there. I didn't see his name on a list and say, 'Hey, let's offer the kid. He's right up the road.' I went and watched him. I watched him against really good teams.

*"I mean, they lost a game in Vegas against the best AAU team in the country, from the West Coast. He was tremendous. He was going against guys that are going to Arizona and places like that. Well, that's what I need. I need guys that can compete with those individuals, that are going to those kinds of places. That's why we put the offer on the table and we cranked the heat up on him, and fortunately, he came here, because I think he's going to be tremendous. He's impressive as a player and a person."*