

12/5/2011: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Monday prior to the Hawkeyes' game on Dec. 6 against Northern Iowa at the McLeod Center in Cedar Falls.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

On what he has seen from Northern Iowa to this point:

"Well, I'll tell you what. They have been really impressive. I mean obviously, you can tell that by looking at their record, but I think Ben [Jacobsen] does a good job of he takes his experienced guys and they play well. They play well together and they play like experienced players. I think in particular when you have those three guards that he has, they are so good. Then you mix in the freshmen group. You get great production there.

"But they execute, they defend, they rebound, and again, you go back to a team that has multiple shooters. I mean, they have guys that can score inside, they have size. But any time you have a team that has that many guys who can make shots, you know, they're a hard team to prepare for. They're a hard team to defend. But that said, they also share the ball, so that I think is a quality that has always been evident in their teams."

On the importance of working for possessions and not quick-shooting against a team like UNI:

"Well, you know what. You can't quick-shoot the ball on the road. I don't care who you're playing against. You certainly can't do it against them. You got to come down, you got to have quality possessions. You're absolutely right. You have to value possessions, and then you've got to move the ball, you've got to screen, and you've got to get good shots at the basket. And you've got to understand how to play the game. You've got to understand how to manage it. You know, it's going to be a different type of game than the last one, and the one before that. It just is."

"When they play up there, and I've coached there, it's not an easy place to play, by any stretch of the imagination. They play well there, they shoot it well there. I think they derive a lot of energy from the crowd there, and it's got to be a situation where you have to really compete. As I've said before, competing is not running up and down the floor. Competing is running up and down the floor and thinking every possession – what we have to do on offense, what we have to do on defense. That will be a real good test for our team."

On how he approaches this game defensively given all of UNI's scoring weapons:

"Well, I don't think from that standpoint, in terms of what you tell them, it's any different from anybody else. You got to get back, you got to stay up, and you got to stay after them. I mean, it's that simple. You can't take a possession off. You can't stand up, you've got to stay in your stance. I think one thing maybe more than any, and we stress this all the time, but it may be as important in this game as any other is communication defensively."

"You've got to talk to each other out there. You can't stand around and assume that everybody knows exactly what's going on. We've got five guys that have to play defense together to stop what they do. It's the only way you survive. If anybody breaks down, if anybody takes a possession off, they're going

to score. It's that simple."

On how much the team has improved with game management over the past few weeks:

"I've seen some improvement. I think you don't really know until you look at a longer period of time, but I think we've gotten better. It's something we've talked about. We obviously made some of the same mistakes in the Clemson game that we made in the Creighton game. That's disappointing. But I think we were better in the Brown and IPFW games, so now what we have to do is make sure we can do that in a difficult road environment."

On what a first true road game could reveal about a team:

"I think how tough you are. You're going to have to really concentrate, stay together. I mean, any time you go on the road, especially when you're playing a really good team, you have to be together. You have to compete together, and that's what I'm looking forward to seeing."

On whether it's more difficult facing a team like UNI or a team where there's a set marked man he wants to keep in check:

"I think this is a lot tougher. I don't think there's any question about that. I think most of the time, any team, any coach that's team is committed, can shut down one guy. Now, sometimes it doesn't work. Sometimes that guy is really talented. They've got the green light, they get hot, whatever. But when you have a team with multiple scorers and big guys who can shoot outside and guards who can drive it, they drive and kick, and like I said, the thing that's really impressive about this team is just how unselfish they are."

"They're clearly, in my view, committed to winning above anything else, and then ultimately everybody gets the credit, and I think that's what every coach wants with his team. They just happen to have a lot of weapons."

On if there's any one area that concerns him most about facing UNI on Tuesday:

"I don't know if there's one area. I don't think in this game, you can look at one area and say if we take care of that, we're going to win the game. You know, we got to take care of the offensive side, we got to take care of the defensive side, we got to take care of the glass, we got to take care of the intangibles. We can't turn it over. You can't turn it over on the road against this group and expect to win. So I mean there's so many things that you have to do, and that's what this level is. If you want to beat good teams, if you want to beat good teams on the road, you've got to do it all."

On if this game can be described as a battle of wills and how success is defined beyond just winning and losing:

"You know, I don't look at it as, 'O.K., we're going to try to force our style of play.' We're going to come into this game and try to win the game. Are we going to run some? Yeah. Are we going to try to press some? Yeah. Are we going to run motion? Are we going to run sets? Are we going to compete defensively? Yeah. But the bottom line is if the possessions are longer because of the fact that they're moving the ball and they're running multiple options, well then that's going to be reflected in the score."

"But by the same token, I think they're a team that I think prides themselves on how they defend. Well then it would stand to reason that the possessions on our end might be longer, which would also be reflected in the score. It's just a matter of making sure we do what we need to do to win the game and not worry about whether we're winning by running or not. That's how I look at it."

On whether Melsahn Basabe has the mentality of embracing playing on the road and if it rubs off on teammates:

"Well, I hope he does. You know, it's the only way to do it."

Anything short of that, and you're not going to win on the road. I mean, it's hard to win on the road. The percentages tell you that. They decrease significantly when you're playing a really good team on the road, so I hope that he and everybody else to a man accepts that challenge."

On what Matt Morrison brings to UNI:

"Well, it gives them another guy who can bury the 3. But I mean, he also can make a play. He's not just a shooter. The kid can play. It just gives them one more gun that you have to prepare for."

On having Ronald McDonald Charities sponsoring Tuesday's game between Iowa and UNI:

"I think it's great to create awareness to such an incredible charity, one that I've been involved with, my wife Margaret has been involved with. Such a phenomenal cause, and I'm really proud to be a part of it and I hope everybody participates to the best of their ability."

On whether Gabe Olaseni and Devon Archie will be available against UNI:

"Yes."

On what stands out about Anthony James, who is currently UNI's leading scorer:

"Well, he can really score. I mean, he can do it in a variety of different ways. He can get his own, he can use screens, he can shoot the 3, he can hit the pull-up, he can get it to the rim. He has got explosive athletic ability. You know, he's crafty. He's a handful, and he's a guy that I think when you look at that team, you know, you better pay attention to him."

On whether he senses his team having more confidence after beating Brown on Dec. 3:

"Well, I definitely think we feel better about ourselves because I'm not sure we were playing like a confident bunch before that game. I don't think we were. We certainly weren't shooting the ball like a confident bunch, and you can't go on the road and win without making shots. So I'm hopeful. I do think, to specifically answer your question, that we are feeling better after a win. We played good defense, we shot it better, but now we've got to do it on the road against a team that's 7-1."

On the importance of pressing to take time away from UNI executing its half-court offense:

"Well, I think the press is important in every game that we play. At some level, it's going to impact the game. You know, we do it more in some games and less than others, and I think that will be a function of when the game unfolds, how much we do it."

On what Basabe needs to do in order to build off his double-double against Brown and not revert back to the slump he was in:

"He just has to play with an energy level. If he plays with that energy level, good things will happen for him. He'll get more rebounds, he'll make more shots, he'll look more comfortable out there. That's what he has to do."

On how much of a role the familiarity between the two teams will have given how they play together in the Prime Time League every summer:

"You know, I don't think that has any bearing whatsoever. Whenever we play anybody, there's so much tape on our team. Nobody comes into a game not knowing exactly what all our players do, and we don't go into any game not knowing exactly what they do. So the fact that they play against each other in the summer I don't think really has any bearing."

On what he has to do to get Matt Gatens going after a couple of low-scoring outputs last week:

"I think Matt has been playing great. I mean, he has been a real leader. He has recognized that we had been struggling. He has played phenomenal defense, he's doing a great job of getting the ball inside, and I'm really proud of him. He'll make shots. I'm not worried about that with him."