

# 12/8/2011: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Thursday prior to the Hawkeyes' game on Dec. 9 against Northern Iowa at Hilton Coliseum in Ames.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

## **On evaluating Iowa State and how it compares to UNI:**

*"I think Iowa State is a very, very talented team. I think Fred [Hoiberg] is doing a really good job with them. They're a unique team to prepare for because of all their shooters and because of Royce White, of course, who can play inside and out. But I think as the season has progressed, they're starting to get a lot of really good play off the bench. I think it's obviously a much deeper team than they had last year, and while they haven't been together, in many ways it's a veteran group in terms of they've got some older guys who have been around. So it's a very tough game for us on the road."*

## **On whether Bryce Cartwright can play and if Devyn Marble would start in his place again if he doesn't play:**

*"Well, Devyn would obviously start in his place again. He did not practice yesterday, Bryce."*

## **On what Royce White brings to Iowa State and if he might be the best player Iowa has faced up to this point:**

*"Well, he's really a unique player. Very few guys his size can handle the ball like he can, so he's smart enough to know he can bring it down and make plays off the dribble and get to the rim, but he also goes inside and he offensive rebounds and he posts. I think one of the things that makes him dangerous is that he really likes to pass, and he's good at it. So he has got the ball a lot and he's unselfish and he finds his teammates. You know, I don't know that I can remember too many guys that are that big and strong, who have that skill set, that sort of unique skill set."*

**On Marble's performance against UNI and how he has grown into playing the 1-spot:**

*"Well he's just getting better and better. I thought he was spectacular because what he did, he pushed it, he defended, he had the stamina to play those kinds of minutes. His assist-turnover numbers are tremendous. He made some steals in key situations. He was a catalyst at both ends of the floor for our team. He's just maturing right before your eyes. It was a new position for him last year, and I thought he handled it extremely well. You know, it stands to reason that he would continue to get better."*

*"I mean, one of the things that has helped him is as he has played more and more, you remember he was out for almost two weeks, I think his stamina, he struggled as a result of not having the stamina that he would've had had he practiced and been working hard, because in that period of time, he was literally allowed to do nothing. So I think what you're seeing also is he's getting stronger and stronger physically as he's maturing as a player. You know, I think that has helped him, too."*

**On whether it's concerning to see opponents have such an enormous advantage in 3-point shooting through nine games:**

*"Absolutely. It's a concern. You know, it's something that*

we're trying to address. I mentioned one of the areas after the last game, our ball screen defense, is not where it needs to be. We've worked on that. We've worked on closeouts, have to get better at that. Sometimes it's a function of teams, too. Obviously Northern Iowa and Creighton, two teams in particular, that have multiple 3-point shooters and shot it well.

"I think a large concern also is we're not making as many 3s. I mean, they're pushing up on [Matt] Gatens and [Josh] Oglesby big time, so we're going to need some other guys to step up. I think Eric May can do that. I think Aaron White can do that. He has been off the 3, although I think he has played really well. And I think as [Melsahn] Basabe gets going more and more, I thought he took some strides in the positive direction the last couple of games, but there's still more there. I think we'll get it out of him."

**On how demanding it becomes defensively to face a team with a post-presence like White that also has 3-point shooters:**

"Well, I think those are the hardest teams to guard. Any team that has a good low-post player that can't shoot, you're just going to pack it in on him or double down on him, and that's pretty much going to be your philosophy. But not only do you have experienced, talented 3-point shooters. You've got a big strong post guy that can go in and out, and then when he goes out, they've got some other guys like [Melvin] Ejim, you've got [Anthony] Booker. [Percy] Gibson has been playing really well.

"You've got other pieces that can score inside if Royce goes outside, and then Fred brings him in and out. He puts him in and out, and I think he sort of gives him the free reign because Royce has got a good feel for how to play. So we just have to adjust to what lineup is on the floor and come to do a better job of guarding the 3, and try to contain a guy that's really talented."

**On if he would like playing a team like UNI at Wells Fargo Arena every year and keep the home-and-home with Iowa State or if everything remains up in the air:**

*"You know, I think it's a little bit up in the air still. I don't know that it's all coming together or not. I really don't. All I know is we're playing Friday night at Iowa State. I'm going to support whatever decisions Gary [Barta] makes. Obviously, there will be some discussion and I think you can understand that there are a lot of factors that go into scheduling. Right now, scheduling is not something that is a priority in my life. At some point in time, scheduling will be a priority in my life. Right now, I'm thinking about how we can try to beat Iowa State.*

*"When we do start talking about scheduling, there are a lot of factors that come into play. You know obviously, your league schedule and how many games you play. Do you have a challenge event like we do with the ACC? You know, what's going to be our philosophy moving forward into exempt events? Do we want to go every year? Do we want to go every other year? Do we want to go to a nice location where we can get some TV exposure? The Old Spice Classic, the Maui [Invitational], what we did last year with the Paradise Jam, Cancun. I think we're going to Cancun next Thanksgiving time. I don't know if it's done, but I think it's pretty much done.*

*"So what that does then is it limits whatever scheduling opportunities you have. Then I think what you have to do is you have to think about, 'All right, we've got to have some flexibility because in any given year, you might want to take on Kansas or Duke or North Carolina. You might have an opportunity to have a TV game like that, and if you don't have that flexibility in your schedule, you can't play those games. You might have a team that's not going to be as good. You might want to downgrade a schedule any given year if you graduate everybody. I've had teams before where I've graduated 6,600 points. Well in that given year, you might have a little*

bit of flexibility to try to get some easier games.

"So, you know, it's going to be a function of what experience you have, what your philosophy is overall moving forward. Obviously, for me, when I've got a good team, I want to take everybody on. I want to be on television. I think it's our responsibility to do that, and I think you got to look at the big picture as we move forward, and I think that's what everybody's doing."

**On if Gatens not scoring in double figures the last three games is a concern or something that will work itself out:**

"Well, I mean, he's getting mugged. I mean, that's the bottom line. Teams are keying on him. They're staying home on him. They're holding him off the ball. They're going after him, so what we have to do is we have to set him up. We have to screen for him. He has got to get some help, too. You know, some other guys have to step up and score. Now, we've done that a little bit. Certainly in the Brown game, we had multiple guys scoring the ball. I mean, the other night we had a couple of guys in double figures. We just got to get more guys scoring the ball more consistently to keep them honest and keep them away from him."

**On Cartwright's status (again):**

"He did not practice yesterday. I would say he hasn't done anything since the Brown game. We're heading up today. I don't see him practicing tonight. I see him trying to do some things as far as getting some shots up. But he hasn't run since the Brown game, and that doesn't bode well for him playing Friday night. But I wouldn't rule him out."

"Again, if you define playing, he's not going to start in all likelihood. Would he play, would he play 10 minutes? Would he play five minutes? Would we say, 'You know what, if he doesn't play in this game, he has got another week before we play Drake,' so maybe we hold him out? But I haven't talked to our

*trainers today about it. But based on how he looked yesterday, I wouldn't expect him to practice today."*

**On getting more TV exposure, especially around the state, factors into non-conference scheduling:**

*"Well, I think you want exposure in the state. We want exposure nationally as well, and I think that's what the Big Ten Network is. Obviously, we're not pleased at all with our TV schedule. But the reality is we've got to play better. I mean, that's just a fact. I'm not saying what you guys don't already know. So I think as we do that, we'll get more games on the Big Ten Network and we'll have more opportunities to play on ESPN. We'll have more opportunities to play on the major networks. That's where we want to get this program. So I don't think I'm doing anything more than stating the obvious with regard to that."*

**On whether he wishes he handled himself differently after being ejected from the UNI game or if he holds no regrets about it:**

*"I have no regrets."*

**On if he turns in tapes of officiating to the Big Ten office and if he did so after Tuesday's loss to UNI:**

*"The Big Ten office did not assign that crew. I've got nowhere to send tapes to."*

**On whether determining where the officials come from factors into the future of the in-state rivalry games:**

*"I think that's part of any contract negotiation when it comes to doing games. Anytime you schedule anybody, that is discussed. I don't think it would be anything unique to this."*

**On whether he was disappointed in how his team reacted when the technical fouls started piling up:**

*"What happened at that point had nothing to do with our team. All the way to the end of the game."*

**On how his team handled playing on the road for the first time and how it bodes for playing in Ames on Friday:**

*"Well, we go on the road and what did we shoot, 51 percent? Is that what we shot? We shot 51 percent. I think we out-rebounded them. We got up 10-0. I would say we handled ourselves pretty well."*

**On Chris Allen and how to defend him:**

*"Well, you better be close to him. That's all I can tell you, and he has got some stuff off the dribble, too. He has got some game on top of the fact that he can make shots. But he makes big shots, so you got to pay attention to him. I don't know any other way to put it. You have to mark him. You have to stay after him. You got to be aware of where he is. If we're changing defenses, if we're pressing, where is he?"*

*"I think that's the hard thing with this team. It's so much easier when it's one guy. But when there's multiple guys that fall into that category, a lot of times on the floor together, then it takes a tremendous amount of communication defensively."*

**On whether opponents are being more physical with Gatens than they have been in the past:**

*"You know what, I can only speak to the last two years. He has been a marked man on this team for two years. You can speak to what happened before that. I don't know that it's anything different than it was last year. I think teams that have prepared for us each of the last two years have looked at him and said, 'If we can shut him down, we can beat Iowa,' and I think that's what they're trying to do."*

**On what he thinks of Iowa's annual rivalry with Iowa State and**

**the buzz surrounding it on a local level:**

*"You know, I think it probably always will. You know, there are fans of both schools throughout the state that go to both games and are passionate about both programs. I mean, I think it's as good a rivalry as you're going to have for two teams that aren't in the same conference. To me, the definition of a true rivalry is, I've got to go through you to win a championship, you have to go through me to win a championship."*

*"That's not the case with us and Iowa State. But that said, we play and we'll continue to play, and we play one year here, one year there. You know, it's a great rivalry in other sports and it gives something to people to talk about, and it's going to be a great atmosphere Friday night."*

**On the grind it can be on the players to play two road games in-state like Iowa is before the UI has finals next week:**

*"I don't think that that's a good thing. I'll be honest with you. But that said, that's what college basketball is. You're going to play road games, you're going to play games before finals. You know, I've often said I think it's kind of interesting because most teams won't play during finals, so what we end up doing is squeezing games in right before finals, and that's when everybody else is studying. Sometimes, I wonder if we should play a game during finals and give the guys more time before finals."*

*"I don't know if that's the solution. I don't know if I have the solution. I don't know if I'm the one that should be coming up with the solution. But I think that's a lot of pressure on these kids academically, especially the ones who aren't as good a student as some of the other guys. You know, some of the guys that might be struggling a little bit, somebody got off to a bad start. We're going to be gone a lot this week and we're practicing and we're getting ready for these games, and we've got finals coming up. But that's just"*



*how it is."*

**On Iowa State moving Scott Christopherson back to the same spot he torched the Hawkeyes from in last year's game:**

*"You know, I wouldn't have looked at him any differently if he was a point guard or a 2-guard. That kid can shoot the ball, and he's a threat, he's a weapon, whenever he's out there, and he has got some other guys with him now. So it's going to be a tough team to defend."*

**On whether he sees the Iowa-Iowa State rivalry and its current format being in future jeopardy:**

*"I don't know that I'm an expert on that. I don't think so, but I don't know that I know enough to say that unequivocally. But I can't imagine."*