

# 1/3/2012: 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 Jan. 4 against Minnesota at Williams Arena in Minneapolis, Minn.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

**On how much of a difference it makes when Bryce Cartwright plays like he did in the win over Wisconsin last weekend:**

*"Well, it changes a lot of things, not the least of which is it enables [Devyn] Marble to go back over to the wing and gives us depth there because now he and Eric [May] can play over there with Matt [Gatens] and it really enables us to run the fast break with Marble finishing and Bryce pushing it. I think it's good for [Melsahn] Basabe. I think Basabe gets involved, gets some great transition opportunities running. I mean, he was running on Saturday.*

*"The other thing is it gives us another scorer. He was a guy that we really relied on for baskets in important parts of the game, late in the game, and when he's hitting that pull-up jumper, you know, that really changes a lot because he has got the defense back on their heels and he hits the pull-up and then they've got to come get him and then everybody else is a little bit more open. So it really changes a lot of things."*

**On what he did (if anything) to help weather his team through early struggles and reach a point where it can win at Wisconsin:**

"You know, I wasn't really that worried about that. We've got good kids in the program and they're going to keep fighting. Our team was sideways at both ends of the floor. Bryce was not healthy, Marble was really coming into his own, Basabe was a little bit overweight. There were a lot of things going on that changed over that period of time. It was not a good thing to have Bryce doing what he was doing, but ultimately I think it benefited Dev, and then Basabe recognized he needed to get thinner and he got that taken care of on his own and has been very effective ever since.

"When you factor Bryce back in, and you know, Aaron White and Josh Oglesby have been very good as freshmen. They needed to get their feet underneath them. I mean, there are a lot of things that have to take place in the course of what is a very long season, and I think that's what you're seeing. I mean, in terms of anything that we did specifically, we just kept working and we insisted they keep working. We believe in them, they believe in each other.

"I've said this over and over, you can't get too high or too low. We had a big win Saturday, but that doesn't mean anything. We've got to come back and have the same kind of effort on the road in a very difficult environment tomorrow night, so we'll see if we have the kind of maturity that can handle that."

#### **On what he has seen from Minnesota on film:**

"I really like Minnesota for this reason – They come into the conference season 12-1, some really good non-conference wins. You know, they beat Virginia Tech without [Trevor] Mbakwe, who got hurt in the game before, and [Ralph] Sampson. Sampson was hurt in that game. You know, Tubby [Smith] has got some young guys playing well and he has got some players playing different positions than they played last year. But they start the season and they lose two games. They're 0-2, but I thought they played really well in both games.

*"Illinois was playing really well, and they come back, take the lead, get it to overtime, get it to double overtime, are right there. And then it looks like a five-point loss, but it was really a one-possession game with 25 seconds to go, at Michigan. They took the lead late. The kid [Julian] Welch hits a big 3. He's having a terrific season. He was a junior college transfer. I really like him."*

*"So they're a little bit of a different team and they've started now to adjust without Mbakwe. They're quick and they've got a lot of athletes that they can run at you."*

**On whether it's fair to say he has more scoring options and has a harder team to guard than he had last season:**

*"Yes. No question about it. That was hopefully something we did by design, you know, in terms of recruiting and by developing some of what we had. You know, I think Marble being very consistent as a legitimate big-time scorer really changes a lot of things, and then you couple that with Bryce's improvement, and certainly Matt has been really rock-solid. Eric May is solid."*

*"Then you have Basabe and Aaron White, and Zach McCabe is much better. You know, we'll get some buckets out of Andrew Brommer and Gabe Olaseni and [Devon] Archie. We've got three players we can rotate at that position and get minutes and quality play. So we've got some more pieces, I think. When you're in a situation where the game is tight, there's more options that we can go to to get buckets."*

**On where he sees Marble playing with Cartwright getting healthy and what he has done at point guard:**

*"Well you know, it's interesting because I probably won't change the starting lineup, even though Bryce played so well. So [Marble] is still going to play both positions. He has played them both very well. His conception of what his position is, is dramatically different, and that's a credit to*

how hard he has worked mentally to really understand what we need him to do in that position. I think it has been good for him. I think it has been good for his development to have the ball, understand how to distribute it, and how to get it up the floor against small, quicker guys, and then move him off to the wing and now he's playing against bigger, stronger guys.

"He has got a knack. He understands how to score, he understands how to get open. He's a phenomenal competitor. He's a fearless player out there when it comes to scoring the basketball, and he doesn't get down on himself if he misses three or four shots in a row and has total confidence that he's going to make the next five. So that's a talent, and his attitude is terrific. I think the most important thing is as well as he's playing, I still think he's going to keep getting better because he's a worker."

**On whether he foresees playing Marble and Cartwright together more regardless of the starting lineup:**

"Yeah. Those guys are going to be on the floor a lot together. I thought against Drake they were on the floor together a lot and played well. They were on the floor together a lot against Brown. That's a game nobody remembers, but I remember it because they both played well together. And if you remember at the end of last season, it ended with those two in the starting lineup when we were playing our best.

"So I think a lot of times it's easy to jump and say, 'Hey, these guys should be on the floor a lot. These guys should be in the starting lineup.' Well, they're going to be on the floor a lot together. There's no question about that, to answer your question specifically. But I don't want to underestimate the quality of play we're getting from Eric May and how hard he has worked. A lot of times, it's the defense that gets overlooked, and he has been tremendous in that area."

**On how different Minnesota looks without Mbakwe:**

*"No, no. It's different. I mean, it's different. You're seeing [Rodney] Williams a lot more at the 4. They've got a lot of wing athletes with Welch, Austin Hollins, [Chip] Armelin. Those guys are slashing, and I think you're going to see pressure, fast break. They're going to push it a little bit more. They're going to be smaller and quicker at times, and you're going to be facing a smaller, quicker lineup, and that seems to be one that has been effective."*

*"Now they can also go big. They can play Sampson and [Elliott] Eliason together. They can still do that. [Tubby Smith] came in here last year, when they beat us here, with a very big lineup. So he has got a couple of ways he can go, and he's doing both."*

**On how long he let the players enjoy the win over Wisconsin before wanting their attention focused on Wednesday's game:**

*"Well, I just wanted them to enjoy it on Saturday, and we shifted our attention on Sunday."*

**On whether it's fair to suggest Cartwright seems fine with coming off the bench:**

*"You know what, I'm sure he would prefer to start. But he's a quality person, he's a captain, and he's comfortable either way. He knows he's going to play. He knows he's going to be a major factor."*

**On whether Minnesota playing more up-tempo than last season might play into Iowa's hands:**

*"I, as you know, prefer an up-tempo game. They're really quick and they really are good in the open floor. So as much as we want to push it, we still have to be careful against them because they can explode. If you remember, last year here at the end of the first half, it was the big lineup that gave us*

*trouble scoring. It was the small lineup that got out in transition and pushed it to 12, so it's something that we don't mind, but at the same time, we've got to be very careful."*

**On whether having the defensive effort from the Wisconsin sustained is the biggest thing he's looking for against Minnesota:**

*"That, and rebounding. They sort of go hand-and-hand. But you can't beat Wisconsin if they're getting multiple second-shot opportunities. There was that one stretch in the first half where they got nine in eight or nine minutes. That was too many, but we came back in the second half and out-rebounded them, with Gatens getting 12. A lot of those shots were coming long when they're shooting that many 3s, so we recognized that and went and got them.*

*"So when you're playing a team that you look at and say, 'Well, maybe Tubby's going to go with a small lineup,' but what they are, they're long-armed athletes that are quick to the ball, so it's one thing to stop them when they come down with the first thrust, but they just keep flying to the glass, tip it in, getting long rebounds and getting to loose balls quicker. You know, that's just as big of a problem."*

**On how much the play in the second half against Wisconsin says about his team's growth from November to now:**

*"Well, it says a lot because we maintained our composure in that stretch. I mean, clearly against Creighton, we did not. We were struggling shooting the ball big time. It's easy to say we quick-shot the ball and we didn't guard [Doug] McDermott correctly and we didn't get out on the shooters quickly enough. I mean, there's a lot of things you can look at and try to address. We couldn't make a shot in that game, and the only, I think, real area of concern for me was we continuously quick-shot the ball, rather than keep them on*

*defense and work the ball and try to get a foul or a lay-up. So I think in that sense, we've grown up.*

*"You know, we got down seven, the crowd came alive, and we didn't panic, and there was still plenty of time. There was still at least 15 minutes to go in the game. Aaron White's 3 was obviously huge because that cut it to four and then we got a stop and a score, and a stop and a score. So we wiped the lead out quickly, but we did that how you're supposed to. We didn't panic, we didn't play nuts, and we played defense."*