

1/9/2012: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery's teleconference on Monday with the Big Ten media:

McCaffery's opening statement:

"Well obviously, we've had an up-and-down season in many ways. You know, we've had two great road wins in league play and obviously a not-so-good performance on Saturday, so we have to regroup from that. I think we'll play better. We're going to need to. We're playing one of the best teams in the country. But I'm pleased with the fact that we've got a number of different players that are contributing, and that gives us all confidence as we move forward."

On the attitude his team has taken on the road, particularly with the last couple of games resulting in wins:

"Well obviously, it's a dramatic improvement from last year. We only had one road win and it was by one point. So I think our professionalism in terms of everything that we deal with. There are so many factors that enter into preparing for a road game, especially in this league."

"You have to get used to a number of different things. Obviously, you have the travel side, you have the crowd and the fact that the teams that we play typically play better at home, shoot better. The runs are going to come, typically, more frequently. And you have to have enough composure, and a lot of times, that is a function of, obviously the

individuals, but I think many times, experience of your players, and we're much more experienced this year than we were last year in handling that.

"Haven't played as well at home – I thought played fairly well against Purdue, didn't play well against Ohio State. I look at that one more as 'They were ready.' They came in and they played like a top 2 or 3 team in the country, and I think at that point, you have to respect them, and their coaching staff and their players."

On his approach following Saturday's loss to Ohio State and how it could be used in preparation for Michigan State:

"You know, I typically in situations like this am very consistent. I look at it like this – What if we had won that game on Saturday? It would have been a huge win, huge crowd. Everybody would be on Cloud Nine. Two road wins, beat Ohio State, O.K. What do we do now? You got to look at it, that was as low as we've been in terms of our performance, then we had a couple of other ones this year that were not good. All right. Do you have to continue to teach? Do you have to continue to grow? Do you have to continue to get better? It's my and my coaching staff's responsibility to break that film down and teach, not blame. Two different things.

"At the same time, if there's a player playing well below from an effort standpoint, then that needs to be addressed in a very direct way. If a player's having a bad game, but he's giving you everything in his tank, well now we just focus on, 'What could we have done differently that might have helped him?'

"So regardless of whether we had won that game by 20 or lost that game by 25, I would approach it exactly the same way – break it down collectively, break it down individually, make teaching points, address effort and concentration – and hopefully we'll be better prepared to go on the road and play

Michigan State.”

On what Ohio State’s J.D. Weatherspoon does that opponents have to be mindful of:

“Well, the thing about that team, and I think you make a good point, very few teams have four players that you have to spend a lot of time talking about. Usually, it’s one or two, sometimes three. But rarely do you say four players potentially are the key to this game. All right, so what ends up happening is you’re already spending time talking about [Jared] Sullinger and [Aaron] Craft, and that’s who it starts with. But then you have [William] Buford, I mean, he’s going to be a first-round pick, and [Deshaun] Thomas scores every time he touches the ball. So you got to talk about them, and then you don’t spend as much time talking about Weatherspoon and [Sam] Thompson.

“They got great play off the bench, and they got in foul trouble. But it was a physical game. They got in foul trouble, but Thad [Matta] had enough confidence in those players to come off the bench and play the way they did. They did not play nervous on the road. They did everything that they’re supposed to do. They were under control, they handled the press, they handled the zone, they ran their offense, they ran the break when it was there.

“Then you take a guy like Weatherspoon specifically, his athleticism is so spectacular. When he’s playing with energy, I mean, he’s an absolute handful. He’s on the glass, he’s flying down the floor, he’s catching alley-oop dunks, and what those plays do is they become infectious with the rest of the team and their energy level. I think when you have a player that’s going to come off the bench and play with that kind of energy and understand his role, accept his role, and excel at it, that’s when you have a team that has a chance to be something special.”

On the play of his bench this season:

"Well, they have been an integral part of all of our big wins, and I think the important thing is not only do they bring us offense, but they bring us some flexibility. You know, you look at last year, Bryce Cartwright led the Big Ten in assists. Now he's coming off the bench. Aaron White's a freshman. He has led us in scoring a number of times.

"We're getting quality play from – and we've got three centers – [Andrew] Brommer, [Devon] Archie and [Gabe] Olaseni. Each has had their own injury issues, but collectively have been very effective more so defensively than the offense that you mentioned. Then we also have [Josh] Oglesby, who can shoot the basketball extremely well.

"There's a number of ways that we can go, and it provides offense, it provides defense, it provides flexibility, and it requires our opponents to prepare for a multitude of options."