

1/12/2012: Iowa men's basketball notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game against No. 13 Michigan with the local media during his press conference on Thursday, Jan. 12, 2012, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City.

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – In less than two years, Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery has left his imprint on the Hawkeye basketball program. He has proven he'll stand by his players through thick and thin. He also won't hesitate to voice displeasure whenever he deems it necessary, as was the case during Iowa's 95-61 loss to No. 6 Michigan State on Jan. 10.

Following a technical foul call during the second half of a game that was a complete shellacking, McCaffery's unleashed his well-publicized "wrath" by slamming a Michigan State folding chair in front of his players during the official timeout taking place. What resulted was video footage that

made its way across the Internet and national pundits voicing their opinions on what took place.

On Thursday, McCaffery expressed no regret, saying he didn't feel his team adjusted properly to the both the game's physicality and how it was being officiated as a result of that.

"If anybody thinks I'm going to sit there with my hands crossed when we're down by 40, they got the wrong guy," McCaffery said. "I was brought in here to change the culture. I'm going to coach with passion, and my players know that.

"A lot of people like to infer what was going on or what was being said. Nobody knows what I was saying. Nobody knows what we were discussing during that timeout except for me and my players.

"I have no regrets. I have no apologies. None whatsoever. I'm going to continue to coach the same way, and we're going to keep working, improving, and battling and fighting until we're up by 40."

While some on the outside might not approve of the demeanor McCaffery displayed in that instance or at other various times during his Iowa tenure, among those who have no problem with it are his players, who went to bat for him Thursday.

"He wants to win," junior forward Eric May said. "That's the passion that I want to see. That's the way he coaches, and I respect that."

Dealing with humiliating defeat

As for everything else to take place during the Hawkeyes' massacre inside the Breslin Center, watching what unfolded on film upon arriving back home proved to be as difficult as living through the actual moment of being pummeled.

While the tape may have been brutal to watch, players knew it

had to be done.

"You'd rather not [watch the film], but you need to," senior guard Matt Gatens said. "You got to watch it because that's the only way you're going to learn from it."

While Iowa got off to a slow start, the Hawkeyes were able to cut their first-half deficit down to 30-22 before Michigan State pulled off a 16-0 run that completely put it out of reach.

"There is the game right there," McCaffery said. "You can't spot a team eight and then let them go on a 16-0 run."

"That's a maturity that we have to develop, and the only way to get there is to go through it."

Senior guard Bryce Cartwright said the poor effort of scrambling on defense against the Spartans was what stuck most with him from watching the film.

"They were doing a great job of moving the ball as we were trying to double-team them," Cartwright said. "They got a lot of open shots. A college player is going to make those."

Looking ahead to Michigan

For the fourth time in five games, Iowa faces a ranked opponent as No. 13 Michigan visits Carver-Hawkeye Arena to play the Hawkeyes at 12 p.m. Central on Jan. 14. The Wolverines enter coming off a 66-64 overtime win over Northwestern on Jan. 11 to move to 4-1 in league play. However, Michigan has only played one Big Ten game away from Crisler Arena thus far, a 73-71 loss at Indiana on Jan. 5.

"Just from knowing them, they're just a really consistent team," May said. "They like to play their style of game, and they have a bunch of guys that can come in and affect the game at any moment."

Barring a match-up in the Big Ten Tournament, Saturday's matinee will be the only time Iowa and Michigan will meet this season. The Wolverines have won six straight against the Hawkeyes, including both regular-season contests last year. Additionally, the last three meetings at Carver-Hawkeye Arena have all gone to overtime, with the most recent contest being a 75-72 Michigan victory.

Two of the heavy Wolverine contributors in that OT game last February were guard Tim Hardaway, Jr., and forward Jordan Morgan, both of whom are now sophomores. Hardaway, Jr., led Michigan with 30 points that afternoon, shooting 9-of-14 overall and 5-of-7 from 3-point range. He enters this game as its leading scorer, averaging 16.1 points per contest.

"He's a tough one," Gatens said. "He kind of does have a pretty bright green light at times, it seems like. You just got to stay with him everywhere and don't give him any open looks."

Burke catching attention

The one Michigan player McCaffery heaped an enormous amount of praise toward Thursday was freshman guard Trey Burke.

McCaffery, who said he attempt to recruit Burke out of high school, took it a step further by saying Michigan was better with Burke playing the point than it would've been with Darius Morris, who left early after last season and was selected in the second round of the 2011 NBA Draft by the Los Angeles Lakers.

"He doesn't really have any weaknesses that I can see," McCaffery said. "He's obviously playing at a maturity level unlike most freshmen point guards."

"I think if you watched him, you could see it coming. I mean, I saw it coming."

In the Wolverines' most recent game against Northwestern, Burke finished with 19 points and seven assists. While he only shot 5-of-17 from the floor, he did so playing all 45 minutes of that game and also nailed all eight of his free-throw attempts to help guide Michigan to a win.

"He has just really come in and found his own way and has a lot of swagger to him," sophomore guard Devyn Marble said. "He can really get to you. He can drive on you, shoot. A real versatile player."

Possible lineup changes?

The second half of Iowa's game against Michigan State began with Cartwright and freshman forward Aaron White over May and sophomore forward Zach McCabe. White ended up leading the Hawkeyes in scoring with 15 points and also had six rebounds in 26 minutes of play, while Cartwright finished with a team-high five assists.

While McCaffery said no final decision would be made until he talked to individual players, he strongly hinted at the likelihood of changes being made to the starting lineup for this weekend's contest with the Wolverines.

McCaffery added what will factor into his decision-making between now and tip-off were recent performances, who played well, and who he felt gives the Hawkeyes the best chance to win games.