

# 11/7/2012: Iowa men's basketball notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery discusses the Hawkeyes' season opener against Texas-Pan American during his press conference held Wednesday, Nov. 7, 2012, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City.

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – The official start of the Iowa Hawkeyes' 2012-13 season comes Friday night when they open up against Texas-Pan American at 8 p.m. Central inside Carver-Hawkeye Arena. It's the first of four straight games Iowa will play at home before traveling to Mexico for the Cancun Challenge.

For players like freshman guard Mike Gesell, who along with freshman center Adam Woodbury are both projected to start in their official Hawkeye debuts, the anxiety to get the season started is rapidly increasing.

"It's already starting to get tough to concentrate in class," said Gesell, who scored a team-high 18 points in the Hawkeyes'

100-54 exhibition victory over Quincy on Nov. 4. "I'm just continuing to work hard in practice. I can't lose the focus."

Texas-Pan American enters this contest returning three starters from its squad a year ago. Two of those three starters are in the Broncs' backcourt and as a whole, their roster features a plethora of junior college transfers on it.

"I think it will be a very good game for us to be challenged in a way," Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery said. "We're going to have to game plan. They've been around and they've put up numbers and they can score."

### **Staying 10-deep**

McCaffery made clear Wednesday there is "no question" that he goes 10 players deep with his rotation for this season. In last weekend's exhibition, Iowa used nine different combinations where all five players on the court included the group of 10 players.

There were also spurts where the Hawkeyes essentially played with two different groups altogether. There was the starting five, which featured Gesell, Woodbury, sophomore Aaron White and juniors Zach McCabe and Devyn Marble. Then there was "the second group," consisting of freshman guard Anthony Clemmons, sophomores Josh Oglesby and Gabe Olaseni, junior Melsahn Basabe and senior Eric May.

While this is how it appears the groups of players will look for now, McCaffery said what he sees being good is that players can interchange between groups and his team as a whole wouldn't be missing much of a beat.

"This has been a much more complicated thing to manage when you look at players that deserve to play and players who are expecting to play and they've done nothing to suggest that they shouldn't play more," McCaffery said. "There's only so many minutes to go around."

One thing McCaffery was pleased about during the exhibition was that every substitution he said he made was the result of players getting fatigued as opposed to frustrations mounting either on the court or with him on the bench.

As he experimented with different lineups, one thing he ended up doing in the second half of the exhibition was take out his entire starting five at once and replace all five players with that "second group," which proceeded to score 23 unanswered points en route to burying Quincy. It was a hockey-style line change that McCaffery had used once before in a game two seasons ago against Northwestern, but that move stemmed from frustration with what he saw out of his starting five that night.

White said he doesn't foresee that type of rotation taking place in any games, but that he also wouldn't be shocked if McCaffery ever did it for whatever reason, rest or rust.

"With this team, you could, to be honest with you," White said. "You could do exactly what he did during the exhibition game. He could take us five out if we're playing bad or if he's getting mad at us for doing something wrong. If he wants to make a point, he can put five new guys in, so you never know."

McCaffery said he has never found doing that on a regular basis to be productive, but he also made mention of this being one of the deepest teams he has ever coached.

"For me, it'll be an interesting challenge all season long to make sure we manage these 10 players effectively," McCaffery said.

### **Woodbury's intangibles**

Following the exhibition contest with Quincy, McCaffery acknowledged that he should have tried to get Woodbury more minutes. As it turned out, the 7-1 center played 11 minutes

and tallied four points and six rebounds to the cause and the situation was such that there wasn't a valid reason for McCaffery to reinsert him when other guys such as freshman forward Kyle Meyer and sophomore forward Darius Stokes needed some playing experience to work with.

Part of the reason Woodbury didn't play as many minutes in the first half though had to do with foul trouble, something he even said he needs to be smarter about.

"I just got to find the flow of the game and be smart about the fouls I commit," Woodbury said. "It's a physical game. You got to be able to use your head with when not to foul and when to foul."

With Woodbury being one of the most highly-touted freshmen Iowa has had in years, the expectations for him among McCaffery and others in the program are high. But one thing that isn't factoring into those high expectations for Woodbury is statistics.

"When he comes in with his size, something we didn't have, even if he just alters a shot or if someone's shooting it a foot higher than they would if me or Zach [McCabe] were down there, that's huge," White said. "His presence and the way he talks defensively is huge for us."

"And the fact that we can throw it into him, he doesn't have to get a bucket, but he can kick it out to someone else and then they get the assist, you don't see that on the stat sheet."

McCaffery said in time, things such as points and rebounds should go up for Woodbury, mainly due to now being able to play against competition closer to his size as opposed to be the tallest kid on the court all the time in high school.

"I do think the college game will be better for him," McCaffery said. "I think it's hard to be a 7-footer in high

school frankly. Everybody is chopping at you, everybody is leaning on you, you don't get the calls.

"At the college level, it's more physical. They let you bang more because you're going against guys your own size and I think he'll have more space because they're going to be guarding other people. In high school, they're all around him. So I think it's going to be a lot easier for him as we move forward."

### **Basabe comfortable as sixth man**

One player who won't be starting Friday evening is Basabe. Which is fine with him.

Basabe started every game his freshman season and entered his sophomore year as a starter. He was benched in favor of White following a loss last January to Nebraska and has played as a reserve since.

When asked about dealing with the change initially, Basabe made clear the problem with him last season was as much mental as it was physical after the team experimented with putting more weight on him following his freshman year.

"This year, I feel good," Basabe said. "I think it's just up to me to get it done. I don't really think about anything else other than what's ahead of me."

Even though Basabe isn't in the starting five now, it hasn't phased him. His current role as a sixth man is one he has managed adapting to, in part because he knows that his number of minutes hasn't significantly diminished.

"I know if I'm playing well, he's going to keep me in," Basabe said. "What I'm focused on is, 'Am I doing well?' and 'Am I helping my team?' He's not crazy. He's not going to take someone out if they're playing well, so I don't worry about it."

McCaffery said Wednesday if he could start six players, Basabe would be next in line for two reasons. First, McCaffery made mention of Basabe being in better shape entering this season as opposed to when the plan at this time last season was to bulk him up. The other reason is how Basabe has looked on the court in practice, scrimmages and even on Sunday as he posted 10 points and four rebounds while playing 15 minutes off the bench.

“He has been terrific,” McCaffery said. “He has just been productive when I put him in and I leave him in. He’s getting it done for us.”