

12/10/2012: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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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're coming off a big win for our program. We beat a very good Iowa State team. I think one of the impressive things in that game was we out-rebounded a team that was fourth in the country rebounding and had really impressed me on the glass, a very experienced team.

"We're playing some young guys. We made a change to the starting lineup a few games ago and it has worked well for us in a couple of ways. Number one, the young guys are playing well and number two, and probably more importantly, the experienced guys are comfortable coming off the bench and accepting their roles and excelling in their roles and that's what you need to be a good team."

On whether the Big Ten as a conference has been even better than he anticipated:

"Well I think, to be truthful, I'm not surprised at all. You know, I think when you look at Minnesota in particular, the development of their perimeter players throughout the course of last year, you could just see it coming. They had some big wins, they had some tough losses. But at the end of the year, they were so consistent. Then [Trevor] Mbakwe comes back and [Rodney] Williams is playing really well as a senior. I just

like the way that team has come together. Tubby [Smith] has done an unbelievable job with that group.

"You know, John [Groce] walked into a situation where nobody really knew what was going to happen and he has done an unbelievable job with that team. Obviously, you know, they've got three really good seniors that are playing and they've brought young guys along. They're playing at a speed that we might be comfortable with, but they might have as much speed as any team in the country right now and that's a scary thought.

"You know, I look at it that there was probably, just about all of us felt like we had a chance to go to the NCAA tournament. Obviously, we're not. But I think ultimately, it will be interesting to see how many get in because we may end up beating each other up all season long."

On what's important to him when putting together a non-conference schedule and the importance of strength of schedule:

"You know, for me, it changes year-to-year. You know, if you feel like you're established, you may look at it one way and be relatively consistent. Most of the years in my career, I've been in a mid-major program and we amped it up to try to impress in case we were a 25-win team that needed to get in and needed RPI strength. You look at RPI strength in the Big Ten, but you do need to challenge yourself outside of the league.

"But I think you have to be careful. It's great to say, 'Well, we're going to take them all on,' but it's going to be a function of experience, what type of scorers do you have coming back, do you think you can score, do you think you can win on the road, do you think you're mature enough, do you think you're tough enough, do you think you're ready and I think you have to be really careful over-scheduling, in

particular with a young team.

"So what I do is I try to assess where I think I'm going to be and if you think about it, we're scheduling a year or sometimes two years ahead, so you try to project what your team's going to look like, what's the composition going to be like. You know, we figured we had at least two freshman starters this year. It turns out we have three.

"So when you start three freshmen, a sophomore and a junior, you know, you got to be real careful about taking guys on. But at the same time, I think it's incumbent upon all of us to try to play teams that would essentially be marquee names that would help our RPI and play some major TV games outside of the league. I mean, our league does that all the time.

"So what we'll do, obviously we have the ACC/Big Ten Challenge, we usually go to a somewhat prestigious exempt event. We always play Iowa State. We're always going to play Northern Iowa in-state, which is a monster game for us. Then little by little, I think what you'll see us do is add a team or two and try to get another national TV game, if possible."

On what he did when replacing Zach McCabe with Anthony Clemmons in the starting lineup:

"Well you know, in Zach's case, it was real simple because he does the exact same one way or the other. You know, I brought him in, I spoke to him. I felt like I owed that to him and I wanted to hear if he had any reservation about it. I mean, Zach McCabe is all-in. You know, he comes off the bench, he starts. Whatever I need him to do, he's going to try to help our team win and what that does is it speaks to his character.

"In regard to Clemmons, I didn't say anything to him. I just moved him into the lineup and he just took it from there. I did that because it was a reflection of my confidence in him and my expectation for him. I don't want to have a lengthy discussion of, 'Do this, do that. Don't do this, don't do

that,' because then it looks like I have reservation about it.

"I felt like it would be good for our team and I've been impressed from the beginning of the year because [Melsahn] Basabe's another guy that probably feels like, 'Hey, I could be starting. I should be starting.' But the reality is both he and McCabe know they're going to play, many times, starter's minutes and have been very intricate parts of our success that we've had and will continue to be.

"So if you look at three freshmen in the starting lineup and say, 'Boy, that's great.' But as you know, it could not be great because if the upperclassmen don't buy in, it could be an absolute disaster. We have great chemistry on this team. We have great respect for one another. We pull for one another and it really makes it pleasurable for me to coach in that environment."

On whether Clemmons exceeded his expectations against Iowa State:

"Well you know, it's very consistent with his personality, if you know him. He's very confident, but he doesn't get carried away with himself. He never makes it about him. He's not going to get into a personal thing with the other team's point guard. He's going to try to engineer victory for our team.

"The one thing in terms of your question with whether he has exceeded expectations, a lot of times you don't know what you've got until they get here, you know, especially in that position. I thought he was a really talented player. I thought he was a really intelligent person. But can you play point guard at this level? You don't know that until you get here.

"He thinks the game and has great pace to his game. He doesn't panic if they're on a run. He doesn't get carried away with himself if we're on a run. You know, he has got a real uncanny ability to shoot the ball when we need him to and pass the ball when we need him to, an understanding of what we need to

do when. Typically, you don't have that until later on in your career and that's what has been fun to watch with him."