

# 12/28/2012: Iowa men's basketball notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery discusses the Hawkeyes' Big Ten opener against No. 5 Indiana during his press conference held Friday, Dec. 28, 2012, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Fran McCaffery and his players are all aware. They sense the reinvigoration surrounding the basketball program after getting through its non-conference slate with an 11-2 record that features wins over Iowa State and Northern Iowa.

They know of the recent hype, which includes well-known bracketologists such as [ESPN's Joe Lunardi](#) and [CBS Sports' Jerry Palm](#) projecting the Hawkeyes to be among the 68 teams reaching the NCAA Tournament next March.

And now, they're preparing of the monster it'll be encountering over the next 10 weeks known as the Big Ten. Not

only that, but Iowa finds itself in position to make an enormous statement out of the gate as it opens league play on New Year's Eve at home against fifth-ranked Indiana, a team that was No. 1 in the country as recently as two weeks ago and was the preseason pick of many to win the conference.

Just getting to this point has been somewhat of a relief for McCaffery, who feared his relatively young team might overlook some of its more recent opponents since Indiana was in sight.

"I was worried. Obviously, we were locked in for Iowa State and Northern Iowa and then we had two games [against South Carolina State and Coppin State] before we played Indiana," McCaffery said. "That was a time where I was worried about us looking ahead. I was proud of the fact that we didn't slip there and we took care of business and now we can focus on Indiana."

If the Hawkeyes are going to record that signature win Monday afternoon inside what's expected to be a sold out Carver-Hawkeye Arena, one area of importance is going to be depth. Indiana is regarded as one of the deepest teams in the entire country and features a reserve in junior forward Will Sheehey who has played like a starter for the Hoosiers with a double-figure scoring average.

Meanwhile, Iowa has gone as many as 11-deep in games throughout the season and the Hawkeyes have one bit of good news regarding their bench. McCaffery said junior forward Melsahn Basabe is expected to play Monday after leaving their last game against Coppin State on Dec. 22 with an ankle injury.

Having him back, as well as other veteran players who have shown productivity in reserve roles, could prove vital over the course of Big Ten play. As it pertains specifically to Monday's game, that productivity is something the Hawkeyes will need.

"We've grown a lot," senior forward Eric May said. "Everybody has grown a lot throughout the year and it's only going to help us even more when we have guys we can rely on coming off the bench."

### **Battle of 7-footers**

Iowa freshman center Adam Woodbury will start Monday's game with the task of guarding Indiana's Cody Zeller, who is considered one of the best players nationally at any position. On paper, this match-up is intriguing in that both centers are 7-foot (Woodbury's actually listed at 7-1).

As a freshman last season, Zeller had his way with Iowa in two meetings. When the Hoosiers won 103-89 at Assembly Hall back on Jan. 29, he was dunking left and right on the Hawkeyes and finished with 26 points on 11-of-12 shooting. In the Feb. 19 rematch won by Iowa, Zeller still managed to post a double-double of 15 points and 13 rebounds.

This season, Zeller has averaged just over eight rebounds per game, leading the Big Ten in that category. Woodbury said Zeller's work ethic is what stands out most to him when watching the Hoosier big man play.

"Nobody outworks him every time he steps on the court," Woodbury said. "I mean, he's playing as hard as he can and it shows. He's getting a lot of rebounds, a lot of loose balls, keeping them alive for his team, and good things happen."

The intrigue is centered around how Woodbury does against Zeller, but McCaffery made clear he plans to use a rotation against Zeller that will include Woodbury, Basabe, sophomore center Gabe Olaseni and junior forward Zach McCabe, who has played the 5 whenever Iowa has utilized a smaller lineup.

"It's going to have to be a collective effort," McCaffery said. "You got to sprint back. If you don't, he's going to dunk the ball. You got to play him before he gets it."

## Marble vs. Oladipo

While the battle of the bigs has gotten more attention, perhaps the most crucial match-up that will determine who wins Monday's contest is out on the wing featuring a pair of juniors – Iowa's Devyn Marble and Indiana's Victor Oladipo.

Just as Marble has evolved into a key player for the Hawkeyes over the last two years, Oladipo has done the same for the Hoosiers. As of Friday, the 6-5 guard was the Hoosiers' second leading scorer averaging 13.5 points per contest and his 67 percent shooting from the floor leads the entire Big Ten. He also leads the conference with 31 steals.

"We're both more mature in our games," Marble said. "We're picking our spots better, learning the game better, playing in the flow as we're getting older, just like the guys before us. It has really benefited us both a lot from this year as I've seen them play."

Marble, who is currently Iowa's leading scorer, has put up double-figures scoring three of the four times he has played against Indiana, including 18 points off the bench as a freshman in a 91-77 win in 2011. But these showings against the Hoosiers have come while playing a lot of minutes at the point as opposed to being out on the wing like he is now.

Last year's contest in Iowa City marked the only time Oladipo has started against the Hawkeyes. He scored 15 points in that game while playing 23 minutes, but also finished with four fouls. Like Marble against the Hoosiers, Oladipo has scored in double-figures three of the four times he has played against Iowa in his career.

"He's a real strong guy," Marble said. "He really likes to drive it and he's explosive and athletic. It's always a battle between me and him."

"At the end of the day, we just compete hard. That's what I

think you're going to get out of these two teams."

### **White vs. Watford**

Another match-up to watch out of the gate features sophomore forward Aaron White battling wits with Indiana senior Christian Watford. As far as individual match-ups among starting 5s go, this is the only one where the 1-inch difference in height leans towards the Hoosiers with Watford at 6-9 and White at 6-8.

Two other points of note here regarding these players – 1. The meeting won by Indiana was White's first career start in place of Basabe. 2. In their most recent game against each other, Iowa shut down Watford, who played 24 minutes and finished with just one point.

As of Friday, Watford is third on the Hoosiers in scoring with 12.8 points per game this season. From behind the 3-point line, he's shooting just under 50 percent and through 12 games, he has only missed four free-throw attempts and leads the Big Ten in free-throw shooting percentage.

"You look at mock drafts, he's a first- or second-rounder depending on who does it, so you know he's a potential pro," said White, who is averaging 13.6 points per game himself. "He shoots the crap out of the ball from deep. At 6-9, that's really impressive."

But it's not just scoring that could sway how this match-up goes and thus, how this game goes. Watford is second to Zeller on the Hoosiers in rebounding with 76 boards, while White is currently the Hawkeyes' leading rebounder with an average of 6.5 boards per contest.

McCaffery also cautioned that when Sheehey does enter the game, the 4-spot is where he could potentially do the most damage playing alongside Oladipo in a smaller lineup.

## **Familiarity with Ferrell**

Kevin “Yogi” Ferrell came to Indiana touted as one of the top freshman guards in the entire country and to this point has backed up the hype with his on-court production. His 61 assists lead the Hoosiers and among Big Ten players, only Michigan’s Trey Burke has more assists this season.

McCaffery described Ferrell as a player who has made “a dramatic impact” on the Hoosiers this season, crediting him for being a big factor in Indiana’s ability to compile high-shooting percentages night in and night out.

“He gets them the ball when they’re open,” McCaffery said. “I mean, he loads them up and he’s constantly breaking his man down and creating opportunities for those guys to get open shots, whether it be in transition or out of their half-court.

“He pushes it, so he has made their break better. He gets the ball inside, he finds 3-point shooters and he makes plays. He makes plays late.”

Both Anthony “Sapp” Clemmons and Mike Gesell said they have familiarity with Ferrell from their AAU days. At least early on, Clemmons will most likely draw the assignment of guarding the Hoosier point guard, which is fine with him since he was already motivated to play him anyway since Ferrell was a higher-rated point guard coming out of high school.

“He’s really fast. I know he’s quick with the ball,” Clemmons said. “He played 17s when I played 16s. I didn’t know who he was at first. Then once I saw on the Internet, I figured out he was in my class and knew he was going to Indiana.

“I mean, that guy is incredible with the things he can do, creating for others.”

## **Defending Hulls**

One of Indiana’s X-factors Monday afternoon will be in the

form of 6-0 senior guard Jordan Hulls.

Entering the Hoosiers' game Friday evening against Jacksonville, Hulls was averaging 11.1 points per contest and shooting over 50 percent from beyond the arc (his 30-of-57 shooting 3-pointers is currently second in the conference). Assuming Clemmons takes on Ferrell, freshman guard Mike Gesell would have the task of combating Indiana's 3-point specialist.

"He's a tremendous shooter and he's always working," Gesell said. "You can tell he's a senior. He's just a leader out there. He plays very confidently and we've got to get up into him, get him off rhythm right away."

Like Watford, Hulls was a player who struggled for Indiana when it lost to Iowa, finishing with just two points on 1-of-5 shooting. But in another game that was won by the Hawkeyes two seasons ago in Bloomington, Hulls was 10-of-17 shooting and finished with a game-high 24 points.

Hulls' shooting might not be the only concern for the Hawkeyes while defending him though. McCaffery made emphasis Friday of how Hulls hurt the Hawkeyes in other areas and has had as much of an impact against them as Zeller has.

"He happens to be a great shooter, but he's not what I would call a shooter," McCaffery said. "He can play off the dribble and he can find people."

"You got to be locked in and guard this guy because he can hurt your team in a lot of different ways."