

1/7/2013: 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:

"As far as our team's concerned, I do not think we played very well yesterday for the entire game. I do think we played well for a good portion of the game and hopefully that will be a learning experience for us. We played a fantastic team on the road and I think that's the challenge before our team.

"We have played extremely well at home this year. We have not played well on the road. I think by virtue of the fact that we're playing a lot of young guys, that's something they're going to have to learn and grow and develop because we all recognize how difficult it is to win on the road in this league."

On Anthony Clemmons' performance against Michigan:

"I think the most impressive thing about him ... I think we all recognize how good a player Trey Burke is and the important thing is whoever lines up against him, you know, has to go and challenge him. That's what Anthony did. He went after him defensively, he drove along him. You know, 14 points and seven assists and played him tough and really made Trey work.

"To Trey's credit, he was able to come through for his team and have a really good game and distribute the ball well like

he always does. But I just like the attitude that Anthony came into the game with."

On Mike Gesell and how he has held up physically:

"You know, he came in in great shape. I mean, he's an incredible worker, a tireless worker. He is very committed to his conditioning and has a great mindset. You know, it's not easy. I recruited him to play as a starting point guard. He plays a lot of point guard and started our season as our starting point guard. I move him to the off-guard position.

"I think it was good for him. It was good for us. You know, he's much more aggressive offensively from there. But you know, it's a very intense, very physical, very long season and I think so far, he has been absolutely tremendous and key for him because we're asking him to do a lot.

"You know, a lot of times, when I'm taking people out, I'm leaving him in and moving him from one position to the other. You know, it's a lot on a freshman to have to learn all the positions we have on the go, but obviously he's incredibly bright, so I'm thrilled with his development and where he is."

On the biggest difference between watching Michigan on tape and in person:

"You know, I don't know that there was. I mean, when I watched them on film, you know, a phenomenally impressive team to me in the sense that they've assembled an abundance of talent and that's typically a great thing, but not always a great thing because now you've got to get them to play together.

"Now you've got to get them to get the ball up to each other and recognize the primary concern is 15-0 and not where they're going after they leave Michigan and I think that's, to me, been one of the most, or probably the most impressive things when I look at that team. I mean, the way they distribute the ball, the way they share the ball and the way

they defend because they're not huge.

"I mean, they basically start four guards. But the two wings get in there and rebound. They're both very athletic. [Glenn] Robinson's incredibly strong. You know, I think [Tim] Hardaway and Burke and [Jordan] Morgan are kind of doing what we thought they would do, be elite players. But I think Robinson is the guy that ... obviously [Nik] Stauskas is killing it. He's a much more complete player than anyone gave him credit for.

"But to me, Robinson is a guy that's scary when you see where he is, how mature his game is and how versatile he is, now willing to kind of fulfill his role. If you need him to really be a scorer like he was yesterday, he'll do it. But you know, he doesn't have to do it. He'll do what he needs to do to help his team win. I think that has been the most impressive thing."

On how Melsahn Basabe has come along in the last few games:

"The thing I think that has happened to Melsahn, I mean, he has sprained his right ankle three times and then sprained his left ankle in the Indiana game. So what that has done is it has obviously hindered his conditioning.

"You know, he doesn't practice, he tries to play in the games. We get him on the bike. You know, his game is energy. His game is running and jumping, blocking shots and finishing plays. I think it has been hard for him to be as good as he can be and he's trying to do what he can for us.

"He has been very effective when I've put him in. But I think his best days, if he can stay healthy, are in the coming weeks as his conditioning comes around."

On how he bridges the difference between home and road with a young team:

"Well, the thing that we didn't do in our road losses was we

didn't lock in defensively. You know, we weren't good in transition defense, then we played two very good running teams, but we knew that before the game started. So, it's much easier when you're home and the crowd's going crazy to sort of lock into the game plan and execute the game plan and overcome mistakes, because we're going to make some mistakes. We're a young team.

"When you're on the road and make mistakes, they magnify and what we have to be able to do is be tougher mentally at the defensive end of the floor when those times occur. As long as we were up three or up four yesterday, we were fine. Once they made the run, we crumbled a little bit and that's where you've got to be incredibly mentally tough to stem the tide.

"You know, we had 4-5 possessions in a row where we had a pretty decent shot, but didn't score and we tend to be a team that relies on our offense to stop a run. What you need to be able to do is be a team that relies on their defense to stop a run."

On his early assessment of the Big Ten after the first week of conference play:

"You know what? To be honest with you, it's not what I thought it would be. You know, I think we all knew Michigan and Indiana would be terrific. Maybe Minnesota was a little bit underrated, but I think we saw how that team blossomed at the end of the year. They get Mbakwe back and then those young guys aren't young guys anymore. They're sophomores, juniors and they've got some seniors. They've got tremendous speed and quickness and depth, maybe more depth than anybody right now.

"We knew Ohio State would be good. Illinois, you know, last year was such a strange year for them. They have a lot of guys back, so I'm not surprised. You know they've got D.J. Richardson and Brandon Paul and you tell me that they're a ranked team, I'm not surprised. I mean, those two guys have a

proven shot to be NBA players.

"So to me, despite the fact that maybe some people weren't talking about those two teams in particular, having played against them last year, I knew how good they were. I mean, those are real good teams. It's going to be, I think from top to bottom, one of the best years in the Big Ten in quite some time."