1/21/2013: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery's teleconference on Monday with the Big Ten media:

McCaffery's opening statement:

"We only played one game this week. I thought defensively, it was a continuation of our previous week when we played so well against Northwestern. Obviously, that has been a focal point for the season for our team and hopefully that will continue."

On what it says about the Big Ten when his team can beat Wisconsin after the Badgers go into Indiana and win:

"Yeah, I think it's much more simple than people think. Our league is unique in the sense that there's incredible passion on every campus, so when you go on the road, you're going to play in front of a packed house, no matter who you're playing against. It's also the best league in the country in terms of talented teams, top to bottom.

"So you know, there's never a game where you can say, 'O.K., we can give less than our best tonight and look to the next one.' As coaches, obviously we never want that to happen, but the truth of the matter is it sometimes happens with our guys. Well, in this league, you can't do that and I think everybody knows that and I think in many respects, it's a duty of watching this league and following it because as good as these teams are at the top, the teams from the mid-point down are all tremendous and as you know, you never really know what's

going to happen on any given day.

"That's why I think it will be interesting to follow this league throughout the course of the season and see where everybody ends up."

On Aaron White returning to Ohio Tuesday night and if he's becoming the type of player he was envisioned to be:

"We certainly saw his potential and felt like he could make this kind of impact. The interesting thing about him is I think there's a lot more in there and I think that's the challenge for him.

"As talented as he is, and he impacts the game in so many different ways, as he continues to get stronger, I think what you're going to see him do is expand his game offensively in terms of his ability to go off the dribble and finish plays around the basket. Not that he doesn't do that now, but I think he'll do it even better and then his stamina will improve such that he'll continue to impact the game defensively with his length. You see him do that now in the passing game. He has got great anticipation skills.

"But as he can stay in his stance and really get after people, you know, with that 6-9 frame and great athletic length and great athletic power, as terrific as he is now, I think he has got a chance to be really, really special."

On how he anticipates Anthony Clemmons doing Tuesday guarding Ohio State's Aaron Craft:

"I am, but I'm also interested to see how we do on the road. I mean, we had a great road win at Northwestern. Prior to that, we hadn't really played very well. We're playing a terrific team in a great environment and with one of the best defensive point guards in the country – actually, two of them if you want to look at [Shannon] Scott. So the pressure they're going to put on Mike [Gesell] and Anthony both, you know, will be a

great challenge for them and I'm anxious to see how it works out."

On the challenges of guarding a player like Ohio State's Deshaun Thomas:

"Well obviously, you have to stay engaged because he has got an unbelievable release, whether it's from 3, he's quick around the basket. He has got that incredible scorer's mentality and he has got the ultimate green light. Those guys are hard to guard and he's the kind of guy that before you know it, puts 20 shots up and can have 25-30 points.

"So you have to stay engaged and you have to put somebody on him physically who can match up because, as you said, it will work out to his advantage and with his size, he can go out or in depending upon who you have on him. So it has got to be a unique talent in terms of being able to be physical enough, but also quick enough and strong enough.

"In addition to which, they do a really good job of getting him the ball. They run good stuff and they've got people who can deliver the ball to him, so I think in some respects, it's who you choose to put on him and you leaving that guy on him the whole time. But I think ultimately, you have to be collectively engaged to stop a guy with that kind of explosive strength."

On the NCAA's explanation for not allowing Iowa to wear "Street" on the back of its jerseys last Saturday:

"It was … if you read the rule itself, it's pretty self-explanatory, so what would have to be done in that case is there would have to be an exception granted and I think the issue was there have been so many exception requests. I think they just decided the rule stands as it is and that's pretty much what it was. If you start granting exceptions, then every game, somebody wants to do something for some other reason, some other legitimate cause. They just didn't want to do

that."

On the improvements his team has made defensively and whether that originally led to his lineup change in December:

"Well, that was certainly part of it, no question about that. But I think for us, if you look at last year's season, while there were some tremendous high points, our struggles were clearly at the defensive end in our losses and for us to take any additional steps in getting to the top of this league, we're going to have to guard people because the teams at the top, … we sometimes look at stars and what they do. It's really their ability to stop you from doing what you want to do.

"We have made that the focal point since last season ended. The difference with this team, I think we have a better understanding of it. We're also a little bit older. You know, with three freshmen in the starting lineup, we're now deeper. We're deeper and we're bigger, so I can keep fresh bodies out there on the floor whereas in Year One or Year Two, I probably had to keep my legitimate scorers on the floor longer than I wanted to because that was the only way we could score.

"So I think you're seeing a team that's able to stop people, that's able to get stops in key situations. We're still not exactly where we need to be, but we're much further along."