

2/11/2013: 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:

"Well, I think we had an interesting week. Tough double overtime loss at Wisconsin. A lot of good things in that game for us. Most importantly, I thought we played good defense. They played better than us down the stretch and they won, but I'm proud of a lot of the things we did in that game.

"Had to come back and play a team at home that we play really well in Northwestern and took care of business there again with what I thought was another really good defensive performance. Anything short of that, you're going to get beat by Northwestern. It was great to see Devyn Marble in particular go for 21 [points]. That's the most he has scored in quite some time. He's playing with great confidence and that's good for us."

On if he likes his team's road preparation and approach with road games:

"I do, but I think, you know, if you look at it, there has been a concerted effort collectively to be a better team defensively. I mean, it's right there in the numbers. Now granted, we're much deeper than we've ever been and that helps tremendously. But we've got great senior leadership from Eric May and he's right in the middle of all of that and even

though in those games you're referring to we didn't have some of the greatest offensive performances, it was our defense that kept us in those games and put us in a position to win.

"It's always hard when you lose those kinds of games. It's gut-wrenching. But you know, I think you have to keep perspective and say, 'You know what, if we played offensively like this in the past couple of years on the road, they were 25-point Ls.' So I think we've made great progress."

On if he sees resiliency as a strength of his team despite the wins not showing it:

"Yeah and I think it's hard to, you know, ... I was listening to the part with [Indiana head coach] Tom Crean and he sort of referenced this. You know, you look at your scores and if you win, you feel like all's right with the world and you lose and everything's horrible and the whole world, the roof has caved in on us. The reality is, and I've said this many times to you in particular, it's never that good, it's never that bad.

"What you have to be able to do is look at the situation with some perspective and say, 'Wow, we did some great things at Wisconsin the other night. Boy, it's horrible that we lost.' O.K., well we have to improve our end-of-game situations, even though we got some great shot opportunities. When you miss free throws, it's frustrating. But the bottom line is, if we didn't play well in that game, we would've got blown out. And if we didn't play well at Minnesota after falling down 14-2, which is disappointing, then that would've been a blowout.

"So you know, just like on Saturday, we win a game. We made a lot of mistakes and we have to correct those. It's a constant journey where there's nothing but teaching and hard work and effort that goes into trying to continue to get better so that you don't focus on, 'Wow, is it really tough losing close games.' That's history. That's behind us. We're moving forward now and we just have to focus on the next game and try to be

better so that if we're in a close game, we know what to do."

On what he changed in preparation or in how much time is spent focusing on defense to lead to results of this season:

"Well, I think that the focus this year, and I said this at the start of the year as I'm sure you remember, it starts with we've got to put pressure on the basketball. You know, it starts at the point of attack, whether we're in a full-court press or in a half-court pass, or if we're in a half-court man-to-man or half-court zone.

"It starts at the point of attack, and then another part of it is rebounding, because a lot of our problem last year was we couldn't keep guys in front of us and we give up second shots. Now if you do those two things, teams are going to shoot a high percentage against you and teams are going to get broken play 3s, which is going to be a wide open shot, which is going to increase their shooting percentage from that distance. So just in those two areas, our rebounding is better, our point of attack defense is better.

"We've got more experience. I've got fresher bodies. We're able to sustain defensive intensity for longer periods. We're more mature in the sense that, you know, when you're offense is sputtering and in particular on the road, that's when your defense has to be rock solid. Well often times, that's when your defense falters because your offense is struggling and that's a sign of immaturity or lack of depth a lot of times. This year, we've been able to get some stops but our offense has missed some shots. So I think if you look at all of those things collectively, that's why we're better."

On if he sees any concerns with his team possibly overlooking an 0-11 Penn State:

"I don't see how they could based on how Penn State played us at our place. I mean, they fought us right to the very end. That was a tough, tough game. Then, you look at film of all of

their games and they are right there. They battle defensively, they battle on the glass. They run good offense, they've got two guys that can score the ball and now they've got some guys who are really, really improving.

"We haven't won there, certainly since I've been here, so there are so many factors that I think enter into this situation where without question, Penn State has earned our full attention."

On if there's any one player or group of players in the Big Ten that are more difficult to game plan for defensively:

"Yeah, I mean obviously, the first guy you would hear me mention would be Trey Burke. Often times, it starts with the guy who has got the ball. In particular, if he is a big-time 3-point shooter or big-time scorer and a big-time assist guy. Those guys, in ball-screen situations, are an absolute nightmare and what helps him in particular is he has got 3-point shooters around him.

"But then you can go team-by-team. I mean, Deshaun Thomas is a guy that ... he makes shots sometimes and I don't know how he makes them. He's not even facing the basket. His shoulders are going the wrong direction, he's going the wrong direction and then his shots go in and you say, 'You know what? There's a reason why he had 4,000 points in high school or whatever he had.' This guy, he's their leading scorer and he's one of those guys that if you don't play him before he gets it, you've got major problems.

"Then you go to [Cody] Zeller. He's so long and he's so nimble and he puts it on the deck and very few 7-footers can put it on the deck and run like that. Then you look at a guy like Yogi [Ferrell]. I mean, he's virtually impossible to keep in front of you. You can only hope that you'll get a little bit of room and he misses jump shots, and he's a pretty good shooter. I mean, we can go on and on and on.

"But there are a handful of guys – I mean, [Victor] Oladipo is a handful, you can't keep him in front of you. There are probably 5-6 more players that I could mention."