

# 3/8/2013: Iowa men's basketball notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery discusses the Hawkeyes' upcoming game against Nebraska during his press conference held Friday, March 8, 2013, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City.

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Of Iowa's 12 players currently on scholarship, Eric May is the lone senior. The 6-5 wing is also the lone remaining player from the Hawkeyes' previous coaching regime inherited by Fran McCaffery back in 2010.

May, the team captain, will play his final regular season game inside Carver-Hawkeye Arena Saturday afternoon when Iowa plays host to Nebraska. The Dubuque native who grew up a Hawkeye fan will get to play in front of family, friends and fans who stood by his side one final time after he chose to stay around as the Iowa basketball program went through a complete overhaul.

"It could've been easy to just pack it in and take off," May said. "But I've been an Iowa Hawkeye my whole life. So, it didn't feel right, just because things got tough taking off, switching, plus I really believed in what Coach [McCaffery] said

"I mean, his whole philosophy on what he wanted to do, the energy he brought. He sold me on that and I bought into it."

To put this in its proper perspective, the Hawkeyes are seeking their 20th win of this season on Saturday. During May's freshman and sophomore seasons combined, Iowa won a total of 21 games.

But it's not just that May stuck around while times were rough. As he got older and more responsibilities were placed in front of him, he matured. Once he was finally 100 percent healthy last summer, May found his niche as a player who brought the intangibles night in and night out. His consistency playing that role this season has led to him now becoming one of Iowa's most important players.

"I just had to be the glue guy. The facilitator. Just bring it all together," May said. "I've really embraced that role, just to be the captain and really bring guys together on the court, off the court and do whatever it takes. You know, fill in those gaps that we need each game."

May will be making just his third start of the season on Saturday. But while he hasn't started many games, May has definitely played starters' minutes over the course of the year, especially during Big Ten play.

And for all the topics McCaffery discussed during his press conference Friday afternoon, the one incentive weighing on both his mind and the players' minds is winning Saturday's game for May.

"He's one of the easiest guys I've ever had to coach, just

comes every day ready to go," McCaffery said. "I mean, I can't imagine a better person to have as an employee in your company, on your team. Whatever that team is, you want Eric May on that team."

### **Plenty potentially at stake**

"May Day" will be the major headline Saturday, but far from the only noteworthy storyline when the Hawkeyes and Cornhuskers meet. In addition to reaching the 20-win plateau for the first time in seven years, an Iowa victory would guarantee the Hawkeyes no worse than the No. 7 seed at next week's Big Ten Tournament in Chicago.

Should Purdue beat Minnesota at home earlier in the day, a win would secure the No. 6 seed for Iowa and a first-round match-up against Northwestern, which would be the last of four games played March 14 at the United Center in Chicago. However, if Minnesota wins and Illinois loses on Sunday at No. 14 Ohio State, the Hawkeyes would be the No. 7 seed and face Nebraska again for the second time in six days.

From a national perspective, Iowa still finds itself on the bubble, but also slowly creeping back into conversations regarding the NCAA tournament. But all the talk about whether his team should be one of the 68 dancing later this month remains far from McCaffery's mind right now.

"We never know what's going to happen in that room," McCaffery said in reference to when the tournament's selection committee does convene in Indianapolis next week. "Everybody tries to predict what they're going to say. More and more guys are getting closer to being able to predict what's going to come out of there."

"The only thing we can do is take care of business with what's in front of us."

On the surface, Saturday's game is one Iowa should win, as the

Hawkeyes have won their last six games at home, including a 63-55 victory over Illinois earlier in the week. However, the Cornhuskers are coming off a huge win over Minnesota and beat Iowa back on Feb. 23 when these teams met in Lincoln, Neb. That afternoon, the Hawkeyes saw a 19-point lead evaporate and turn into a 64-60 loss that featured just 19 second-half points.

"We can't have those kinds of lapses that we had there in the second half," junior guard Devyn Marble said. "We got to make sure we're full throttle the whole time. I think that would help us, just us being aggressive, really."

### **Marble, McCaffery both on cusp of milestones**

Saturday could be a historic day at Carver-Hawkeye Arena for both McCaffery and Marble. Should Iowa prevail, it would be the 300th career win of McCaffery's head coaching career, which began in 1985 at Lehigh and also included stints at UNC-Greensboro and Siena before he arrived at Iowa in 2010.

Meanwhile, Marble sits two points shy of the 1,000 career points threshold. The Southfield, Mich., native will become the 41st Hawkeye player reach that mark.

It will also be the first time ever in the history of the Big Ten that a father-son duo would consist of 1,000 career point scorers. Devyn's father, Roy Marble, is still Iowa's all-time leading scorer.

"I think that's cool, being able to change the game a little bit and set a different kind of trend," Marble said. "But at the end of the day, all the accomplishments don't really mean much if you don't win."

### **Gesell update**

McCaffery said Friday afternoon he remains cautiously optimistic freshman guard Mike Gesell could return in time for

next week's Big Ten tournament.

A foot injury has forced Gesell to sit out the last three games after starting Iowa's first 27 contests this season and he won't be playing Saturday against Nebraska. McCaffery said Gesell is no longer wearing a protective boot on the injured foot and that now it's a matter of him taking "baby steps" towards ultimately returning to the hardwood.

"It's a process to get him ready," McCaffery said. "He's walking without the boot, he's riding the bike without the boot. Over the course of the weekend, he'll start running and he'll start shooting. These are all steps."

McCaffery also revealed Friday the second MRI that was originally anticipated for Gesell never happened because it wasn't going to be able to provide enough information.

"There's really no way of knowing until we get to next week," McCaffery said. "I am guarded in that respect because there's no guarantee."