

3/11/2013: 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 you know, it was a good week for us. You know, we won two games against two very good teams. We feel really good about how we're playing, how our young guys are developing. Getting great play from a lot of different people.

"I've been particularly impressed with the development of Gabe Olaseni. He had his best week as a Hawkeye and I think will just continue to get better. Anthony Clemmons, in particular, I thought had a terrific week, especially in light of the fact that Mike Gesell has been out, so everybody else has stepped up to fill in for Mike and you know, I feel really good about how we're playing."

On when he hopes to have Gesell back in practice and when he'll decide whether he plays Thursday:

"Well every day, he does a little bit more. He has been shooting, so you know, he'll try to run a little bit today and then he'll try to practice ... he might try to practice a little today and maybe a little bit tomorrow. Maybe we'll wait for tomorrow and obviously, it won't be for that long. I mean, I think he'll be able to play. The question is going to be how does it feel, how effective can he be. I think he'll be pretty good."

On what he saw in Northwestern's Kale Abrahamson (a Des Moines native) that made him want to recruit him in high school:

"Well, he can score. You know, he can shoot the ball from 3-point range. You know, he's a pretty athletic kid. I mean, he's long. You know, I thought he fit with our style of play and you know, I'm not surprised that he's playing well."

On whether he thinks his team's peaking or if it's just being more consistent:

"Well, I think you make a great point. You start the season and you think you know what you have. You know you have some young guys in particular with this team. We really like our collection of players. You try to bring them together and you keep working and you keep trying to get better and you keep challenging them and you know in this league, the toughest league in the country, you're going to be challenged regularly, not only by the players, but by the coaches."

"You just want to be in the situation to night in and night out, you know, play at your best and be in a position to win and continue to compete and if you get behind, come back and you know teams are going to come back on you and try to keep fighting. I mean, we knew we had to improve defensively. We did. We had to improve on the glass. We did. We knew we needed more depth and you know, we've got that."

"So we feel really good about our development and I think when you look at the grind of a very long season and particularly, in a difficult league, you know, I think you make a point that really exemplifies, you know, the quality of this team."

On if Gesell will play more at the 2-guard to go back to the point when he returns from his injury opposite Devyn Marble:

"You know what? That's a good question. I mean, I kind of like Dev with the ball. You know, I kind of like Mike with the ball. I mean, they both can play off. I haven't really decided"

that yet. You know, it might be a function of match-up, as much as anything else."

On what his reaction is when he hears about Northwestern:

"Well, obviously I have tremendous respect for Bill [Carmody] and the job he has done and as you know, they're a very difficult team to play against, to prepare for. You know, we have beaten them twice this year, but we had lost to them a bunch of times in a row.

"They're a team that, if you watched them yesterday and you see how they compete and how hard that offense is to guard and when certain players are making shots, you see the improvement of Abrahamson, of Tre Demps. I mean, those two guys in particular have really impressed me, you know, after the unfortunate injury to [Jared] Swopshire. You can see [Alex] Olah improve.

"You know, I think you're seeing a team that has continued to battle despite, you know, an incredible rash of injuries that no coach would want to endure, so we have tremendous respect for this team."

On whether anything extra was done in the offseason to prepare for Northwestern's offense given its prior success against Iowa:

"No. I think what helped us ... you know, I think the more times you go against it, the better off you are. You know the first time we played, they absolutely cleaned our clocks. If I'm not mistaken, they had 14 3s in that game. We were scrambled and then last year, of course, when you have [John] Shurna and Drew Crawford, that changes a lot of things in terms of how you defend. I mean, those guys could make plays and make baskets, in particular, at crunch time.

"You know, this year's team is different in the sense that you're trying to put Swopshire in and you know, Olah is coming

in. You've got some new faces and were expecting to have Drew Crawford and JerShon Cobb. You know, it's still the same offense. You still have to understand the differences and it's one of those things where you always feel like no matter what you take away, they're going to get you somewhere else.

"You know, the counters and the continuation of everything that they do is so intricate and ultimately it requires a sustained effort, a concentrated effort by five people working together simultaneously and that's exactly what they're doing on the other side. It's five people working together with intelligent cuts and screening action and hand-offs. You know, you just cannot let up, especially with the way they shoot the 3."

On what it will take besides winning four games in four days for Iowa to make the NCAA Tournament:

"You know, I think it's important that we're in the discussion. I think we've certainly earned that consideration in light of the fact that we're 9-9 in the toughest conference in the country. I think you look at ... I think the RPI is one component of what you look at. I think you look at KenPom, you look at Sagarin, you look at BPI. I mean, all of those numbers are substantially higher. They take into consideration different factors.

"I think you make a great point. We've won six of eight. We're obviously continuing to improve and continuing to get better. We feel really good about where we are. We knew we had a young team coming in and we just wanted to continue to get better. We have a great opportunity to go to Chicago and improve on all of those numbers and that's what we're going to try to do."