

# 10/9/2013: Iowa Media Day notebook



Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery talks about the Hawkeyes' upcoming 2013-14 season during a press conference as part of the team's annual Media Day on Oct. 9, 2013, at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. McCaffery is entering his fourth season as Iowa's head coach.

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

IOWA CITY, Iowa – At this time three years ago, Fran McCaffery had just taken over as the Iowa Hawkeyes' new head basketball coach. Joining him on the journey were four freshmen – Zach McCabe, Devyn Marble, Melsahn Basabe, and Darius Stokes, who redshirted after joining the team as a walk-on.

Iowa had come off one of its worst seasons in school history the year before. People barely recognized the Hawkeyes. When reflecting upon that first season Wednesday afternoon, Marble described it as “the bottom.”

As Iowa prepares for the 2013-14 season, the situation now from what it was before is practically night and day. Expectations have soared to the point where Iowa is likely to open this season ranked in the top 25 when the AP and Coaches polls are both released later this month. The apathy that existed in the fan base when McCaffery first arrived is no longer there, as the Hawkeyes have seen home game ticket sales skyrocket.

"To be able to be a part of somebody to rebuild a program that was once very prestigious, especially from a basketball stand point, it means a lot," Marble said. "You know, I feel like I've made a difference, a change in college basketball. I don't think a lot of guys can say that."

More significant of all, there's a belief that this squad will be the one that returns to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2006, when Iowa was dealt a stunning first-round exit by Northwestern State after winning the Big Ten Tournament earlier that week.

To a T, everyone inside the program has embraced the expectations. They've embraced the fact they're being talked about all across campus, the state and nationally. McCaffery said he's not particularly a fan of tourney talk in January, but acknowledged it as a reality in college basketball.

"Clearly, you want to be in a position where everybody thinks you're going to be good," McCaffery said Wednesday during his press conference at Iowa's Media Day. "I don't think there's any doubt that we are excited that people think enough of our team to rank us in the top 25 and project us to be in the NCAA Tournament. That's exciting. It's an accomplishment for some of the guys who have been here and haven't had that before.

"But the reality is now we have to go out and do it."

The pieces are in place for a team like the Hawkeyes. Only one player from last year's squad is gone, albeit it's a

significant void left behind by Eric May. There's the aforementioned trio of seniors – McCabe, Marble (who led the team in scoring in 2012-13) and Basabe – that McCaffery will be counting on. He's also expecting junior forward Aaron White (the team's top rebounder in 2012-13) and sophomore guard Mike Gesell to both emerge into bigger leadership roles and become more vocal.

"I think they command the respect of their teammates based upon how they play," McCaffery said. "I don't know that you point and say – other than Marble – that there's any one guy. It's going to be a group of guys that are committed to winning."

Iowa has come close the last two seasons, but wound up settling for consecutive NIT appearances. Because the Hawkeyes managed to reach the NIT championship game last April, Iowa finished last season with 25 victories.

After returning home from New York City, the Hawkeyes embarked on a heavy offseason. There were the natural things such as summer workouts and players participating in the Prime Time League. In White's case, he had the opportunity to play in Russia this summer at the World University Games for Team USA.

Last August, the team went on its two-week trip to Europe, where it won five of the six exhibitions it played. And two weeks ago, the Hawkeyes were able to start preseason practices earlier than usual thanks to new legislation recently implemented by the NCAA.

But now comes that challenge of walking the walk. Now comes that challenge of being able to finish out close games in a manner they couldn't last year, to build off their productivity at the defensive end of the floor and improve the shooting numbers, particularly from 3-point range, that plagued Iowa at times throughout last season.

"The best is yet to come," junior center Gabe Olaseni said.

"We want to be playing for a very long time this year and if we can just keep it internalized and not listen to all the chatter outside, I think we can achieve a lot of the expectations we have."

[10/9/2013 – Fran McCaffery press conference transcript \(Source: UI Sports Info.\)](#)

#### **PLAYER AUDIO:**

Melsahn Basabe, senior forward – <http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-Melsahn-Basabe-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3>

Mike Gesell, sophomore guard – <http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-Mike-Gesell-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3>

Gabe Olaseni, junior center – <http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-Gabe-Olaseni-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3>

Zach McCabe, senior forward – <http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-Zach-McCabe-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3>

Adam Woodbury, sophomore center – <http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-Adam-Woodbury-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3>

Devyn Marble, senior guard – <http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-Devyn-Marble-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3>

Aaron White, junior forward – <http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-Aaron-White-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3>

Josh Oglesby, junior guard – <http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-Josh-Oglesby-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3>

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Anthony Clemmons, sophomore guard  
– [http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-A  
nthon-Clemmons-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3](#)

Darius Stokes, junior forward  
– [http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-D  
arius-Stokes-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3](#)

Peter Jok, freshman guard  
– [http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-P  
eter-Jok-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3](#)

Okey Ukah, sophomore forward  
– [http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-O  
key-Ukah-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3](#)

Kyle Denning, junior guard  
– [http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-K  
yle-Denning-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3](#)

Kyle Meyer, redshirt freshman forward  
– [http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-K  
yle-Meyer-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3](#)

Jarro Uthoff, sophomore forward  
– [http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/1092013-J  
arro-Uthoff-Iowa-Media-Day.mp3](#)