

12/5/2013: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Thursday prior to the 23rd-ranked Hawkeyes' game on Dec. 7 against Drake in the Big Four Classic at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines, Iowa.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

On if there's any danger in people on the outside assuming Iowa and Iowa State both win Saturday solely because they're both ranked:

"Well, I don't know if it matters what people think. It's, you know, what the players think. You know, it would appear obvious to me that, you know, those two teams are really good teams. They have been good teams. They have given us problems. Uh, you know, when we've won, it has taken everything we have and we have lost.

"So you know, we're playing a team that's 6-1. They just went to California and won three games in three days. You know, I don't know what else you have to do to get people's attention. I mean, not only that, but they've also won on the road other times.

"You know, I think when you watch film, when the players watch film, they can tell who the good teams are. You know, if you're playing a bad team and you're showing them film, you know, and you're trying to get them to understand, 'Hey, we've got to play every game,' there's always that element of 'I

don't know.' But in this case, it won't be hard at all. I mean, it will be clearly obvious how good this team is, how talented they are and how well Ray [Giacoletti] has them playing."

On Drake being able to already exceed expectations at this point in the season:

"They're a good team. You know, I mean, I don't know who would've said they weren't going to win six games. I mean, they won a lot last year. They've got good players back, they brought in some guys that can play. But you know, that makes no sense to me. I mean, I know they changed coaches. But what did they win last year? Fifteen? Sixteen? I mean, what makes anybody think they were going to win six? That doesn't make sense to me."

On if the amount of talent Drake lost speaks to the coaching being done right now by Giacioletti:

"Well, the guys that are playing are the guys that were good and the guys he brought in were also good, so I mean, he has got a lot of good players. So yeah. I mean, it's a credit to him that he was able to get a couple of foreign guys, he got a junior college guy. I mean, everybody brought in can play and the ones that are still there, they can play."

On what he sees in Drake center Seth VanDeest:

"He's a very good player. I mean, I've always been impressed with him. You know, we played them my first year and he was a big part of what we were trying to do defensively and he had an injury there, but he has been consistently effective for that team and you know, they have two big guys that can also present problems."

"I mean, I think the thing with this team is they've got a lot of different weapons. They can go off the dribble, they've got Seth inside. They've got some wing guys that are athletic and

active. I think they've got a good complement of personnel."

On what he sees in the play of Drake guard Richard Carter and what makes him tough to defend:

"He has got a really good feel for how to play. I mean, at both ends. I mean, he makes crafty plays, he has got savvy. He's fearless. You know, he has got an ability to score outside. He has got the ability to get to the rim. He's really good in the open court and he'll make plays for other people, too. I mean, he's a tough cover for anybody."

On how different Drake is in terms of style of play now under Giacoletti in contrast to when Iowa last played the Bulldogs two years ago:

"Well, I mean, they're just a dramatically different team than that team was. This team has tremendous quickness. I think that's the thing that is noticeable. But like I said, it's not just, you know, they're small and quick. I mean, he can go small and quick, he can play bigger guys if he wants to. He gets productivity, you know, pretty much out of everybody he puts in."

"I think that's the thing that is most impressive. I mean, it's easy to lock into a guy who gets 38 in his first game and is averaging 20 points and [Carter] has been phenomenal. But there are a lot of other pieces that are doing what they're supposed to be doing and that's why they're 6-1."

Of if the game against Notre Dame exposed defensive issues or if that was merely the result of both teams playing up-tempo:

"Well, I think it's a combination of everything. We have to shore some things up. I mean, very few teams have four drivers and four 3-point shooters on the floor at the same time with a 6-11 guy that's really good. Uh, you know, very few teams will have that. That's a hard team to guard and they're going to score points."

"You know, we felt like if we could keep them under 10 3s, we would win and that worked. But I mean, it was obviously in the balance until there were like, 10-12 seconds to go in the game. So it wasn't like it was, you know, a sound way to go necessarily, but I mean, it did end up working out. We just felt like we didn't want to go through another Villanova where they make 14 3s."

"So you know, with the big fella, you know, he was getting one-on-one coverage and he was scoring. We played a lot of zone in the second half and he's crafty, he's around the ball and he finishes around the basket. So I think it was a combination of everything."

On his general thoughts about the Big Four Classic entering its second year and what positives he sees in it for Iowa:

"Uh, I think there are a lot of ways to look at it. You know regardless of who you play, it's going to be a fiercely competitive game and that's important this time of year. You know, you're trying to get your team ready and you want to challenge your team. But you don't want to necessarily with 13 wars because you've got 18 coming up. But you need some wars. You need some battles and you know, obviously Iowa State and that game are going to be two of them."

"Whatever you schedule, for us, it's typically the ACC/Big Ten Challenge, the Iowa State game, either the Drake or Northern Iowa game and then whatever tournament we go to and there may be one other depending on who's good in any given year that we schedule. I feel like that's a good way to compare our team."

"Additionally, you know, it will be a great atmosphere with an opportunity for, you know, college basketball fans in the state to see all of us in one place and it will be a great atmosphere for four really, really good teams."

On Aaron White already reaching 1,000 career points this early into his junior year:

"You know, it's funny. I thought he already had 1,000. I didn't even realize it. He's just, you know, I don't think he ever lacks self-esteem. He is one who believed from the beginning that he could be here. I mean, it was interesting when we recruited him because we were the only school at this level that really went hard on him and seemingly, a lot of other people were wondering, you know, can he play at this level? Is he an Atlantic-10 player?"

"To me, it was a no-brainer and I'll be honest, from where he stood, he always knew he could play at this level. I mean, he's the one that really wanted the challenge. I think initially, the only thing that was holding him back – and when I say initially, I'm talking about the first month, month-in-a-half of the season – was he was so skinny back then and sometimes, it was harder for him. But once we just kind of left him out there, he just kind of saw the multitude of things that he could do to affect the game and I think that's what makes him special."

"You never know, is it going to be his rebounding? Is he going to block a shot? Is he going to make a huge 3 for you? Is he going to steal it? Is he going to get to the free-throw line 13 times? Is he going to have some monster dunks? I mean, a lot of times, it's all of that and sometimes it's only one component. But either way, he's going to have a major impact on every game he plays."

On if he felt White was more assertive against Notre Dame and if he wants that to continue going forward:

"Yeah. I mean, I want him to be aggressive. I mean, he has got the green light to drive the ball, to shoot the ball, to break a play off and go on his own and take it off the rim and go. You know, I just trust him to do whatever he wants to do because he has not ever been a big mistake guy. So it was great to see him play that way, no question."

On how impressed he is with the way his team has handled the various atmospheres it has played in to this point:

"Well you know, I don't know that you'd say I was impressed or not impressed. I mean, we sort of have an expectation that we're going to play a certain way regardless of the surroundings, I guess would be the way I would answer that question."

"You know, we're going to see an atmosphere like that most of the time that we play, so you better be able to handle it and you would hope ... I mean, let's be honest. That atmosphere was a lot tougher for Notre Dame than it was for us. It was more helpful to us and when we go on the road, it will be flipped. But you hope that that component has less of a factor as the season goes on because you're used to it."

On what effect White also getting seven assists against Notre Dame can have on opposing teams preparing for him and for Iowa:

"Well, he's a handful. I mean, I think you're right. I think he's a hard guy to prepare for because he can hurt you in so many different ways. You know he's going to create. He's going to cause you to pay attention to him and obviously, our goal is that we're going to have other guys that you have to pay attention to and I think that's what makes our team good."

"There are just different components that you have to think about when you're playing us. Obviously, the same holds true when we're playing somebody else. But in Aaron's case, you know, it's a lot easier to stop a guy who can only do one thing as opposed to a guy who does all the things he does."

On whether White's defensive effort against Notre Dame's Jerian Grant is more evidence to his evolution as a player:

"You know, I think that's true. I mean, I don't know if he could have done that his freshman year, you know, to have the

discipline. He looks like a guy now that has got experience and savvy and he knows how to play angles and he knows how to take advantage of that length because Grant, I mean, he's crafty off the dribble and he has got such a great stroke and he has got unbelievable range. That's what made those guys so hard to guard because you've got to go 3-4 feet behind the 3-point line and then contain them off the dribble.

"But he was able to, you know, try to limit his touches and kind of make him think twice about, 'Well, I'm going up against 6-9.' Because Grant is not used to playing against guys that are 6-9. He's used to playing against guys that are 6-6 or less. You know, I'm sure occasionally he sees a guy that's 6-8 or 6-9, but he has played point for them. So I think that was a key component in the game, no question."

On if he sees the roles Adam Woodbury and Gabe Olaseni are currently playing remaining that way going forward:

"Well the interesting thing is I think there's evolution in each of their games. I mean, neither of them have topped out yet and the hard thing that I have is I want to play them both more. But then we have some other guys also and I think what I've appreciated is they've both accepted our team being the way it is and they play their tails off for me when they're in there.

"You know, like for example the other night, I felt terrible for Gabe he didn't go back in because Lord knows he played extremely well in the first half and the way the game went in the second half, the way the second half started and they played a lot more zone, I kind of went with my zone lineup of Zach [McCabe] and Aaron and Jarrod Uthoff and we were big enough because they went small.

"So sometimes it's a function of the game, how much playing time they get and I guess the last part, as it relates to your question, is you kind of look at it as one comes in for the

other, but I wouldn't be opposed to playing them both together. Then what happened the other night was I didn't play either of them down the stretch as much because the other guys were doing so well."