

12/20/2013: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Friday prior to the 25th-ranked Hawkeyes' game on Dec. 22 against Arkansas-Pine Bluff at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

On the importance of getting a 3-point shooter like Josh Oglesby back into the rotation on Sunday:

"Well you know, I think that the critical thing is, I mean, I don't look at him as a 3-point shooter. I look at him as one of our better players. I mean, he can pass, he can defend, he doesn't turn it over, he's experienced and he happens to make some jump shots. So I mean, it's important that we get Josh Oglesby back, not that we get a 3-point shooter."

On the amount of minutes he intends to play Oglesby against Arkansas-Pine Bluff:

"Uh, yeah. I mean, he's full go. So whatever we need to do, we'll do with him. He's ready."

On if his team is playing to where he thought it would at this point in the season:

"Yeah, I think so. I mean, I think we're about where I thought we'd be. You know, we've played well at times. We've been fairly consistent, I think. You know, we've gotten really good

play from a lot of different people. I think we've competed. Yeah, I think that's safe to say."

On if he emphasizes on the positives from the Iowa State game as much as he does how it ended:

"Yeah, I think that's a good point. I think you have to do that in every game. As hard as that is because you're disappointed after a tough and difficult loss, you're kind of euphoric after a big win. But let's say we had won that game. O.K., let's say Mike [Gesell] made both free throws, they miss, we win by one and people are jumping on top of each other, all that stuff. It doesn't change what happened in the previous 40 minutes.

"You just said there were some really good things that we did. You know, we made some mistakes. You know, we can't foul and Adam Woodbury was spectacular. We can't foul with 1:29 up five. We can't do it. We can't rebound with 48 seconds to go and the lead and then turn it over. So you know, you learn from those mistakes.

"I mean, Aaron White had 25 points and 17 rebounds. He was fabulous. He was spectacular. I mean, you know, you go back and say, 'Hey guys, let's point this out. We can't make this mistake, we can't make this mistake.' Now actually, there wasn't a ton of those. We missed some free throws. O.K., maybe we could have been dribbling the ball more one time instead of settling for a jump shot, you know, so we're in the bonus earlier maybe, we're in the double bonus earlier. We're usually in the double bonus. All of a sudden, we had committed 27 real fouls, but we committed 27 fouls, which was a bit interesting to me.

"You know, you just deal with like what you said. You deal with the road and you deal with the good things. We spent as much time, if not more time, pointing out the good stuff in the film session than the mistakes we made. But you do both in

a win or a loss."

On his current approach with recruiting and the open scholarships he has:

"I don't think you can sit down today and do that. It's like this – If we felt like there was a good player we could get, we would take him. If we felt like there was two good players we could get, we would take them and then you go into next year. If there's nobody we're thrilled with, we'll carry them both and go with this group.

"You know, I would only sign a guy if I thought he could help our team. I mean, obviously it's nice to have two scholarships going into the spring, you know, and we're looking to the next class because you look at who we lose in these next two classes. We lose six really good players. So that's why it's critical we don't just get a body and say we're going to go 1 and 3, 1 and 4, 2 and 2, whatever. 2 and 3.

"Because if you think about who we're replacing, you know, [Melsahn] Basabe is a 1,000-point scorer, [Devyn] Marble is one of the best players in the league, [Zach] McCabe is close to being a 1,000-point scorer, Aaron White is one of the best players to have ever played here, [Gabe] Olaseni has been really, really blossoming and could have a fabulous year next year and Oglesby has been terrific. So we have a lot to replace here and you've got to be careful not to throw a scholarship out just to get a body, just to fill a scholarship."

On the improvement Oglesby had made during the offseason before injuring his foot last month:

"Well, he was in phenomenal shape and he will not be in as good a shape now obviously, but he's pretty good. I've been impressed with him this week.

"The thing about Josh is he just really knows how to play and

when you put a guy on the floor who's 6-6, who's tough and can make shots and can handle the ball and knows what to do, knows where to go, knows where to line up, knows how to play against zone, knows how to play against the press, knows how to play against man-to-man, knows how to play against quickness, knows how to play against physicality and has been through the wars, those guys help you win.

"You know, over the course of 40 minutes, they help you win. Plain and simple."

On having this current stretch of one game over 18 days and if he likes having it:

"No. No. But it's not always possible to lay this schedule out exactly the way you want it, so you do the best you can. I mean, the Atlantis thing, you know, put us in a little bit of a box because we had to rush home to play Notre Dame on Tuesday and the Drake and Iowa State thing are set. We moved the Fairleigh Dickinson game for a variety of reasons. I don't need to get into all the reasons and then we're happy to have at least one game after finals.

"You've got to take finals off, so you're going to be off for a stretch no matter what and then you know, I want the kids to have a couple of days of Christmas, if I can. I mean, unless we're playing in a Christmas tournament, I want the players to have a couple of days with their families, away from basketball, because then what comes after is the Big Ten schedule.

"So you don't necessarily know when that first game is going to be. You know, maybe in a perfect world, you take one of the games out that we've already played and put it before the Nebraska game and you space out those games that all came so fast and the games come a little more smoothly in the course of the schedule.

"But like I said, you have certain things here with

tournaments, with Iowa State, with the [Big Four] Classic in Des Moines and with the ACC/Big Ten Challenge and then you're dealing with other people's schedules and you're just trying to make it work the best you can."

On the importance of regaining the rhythm that Iowa had as a team the last few weeks:

"You know, I don't think about that. I mean, I think it's a good point. We are playing at I think a really good rhythm offensively, in particular. Our defense has been pretty good, with a few exceptions. You know, we're rebounding the ball, we're not turning it over a ton, which I would not have expected to.

"But everybody kind of goes through this final exams, who's going to be at practice, you know, lousy practice today/let's try to do better tomorrow. You know, let's try to get free throws in, let's get film sessions in, let's make sure we focus. You know, it's crazy because we do so much right before finals and then we take finals off. When everybody's studying, that's when we're playing a lot of our games because you can't play during finals.

"For us, we just look at it like this – show up today, have practice, try to get them focused, try to get them organized. We have two games in 18 days or whatever, one game in 18 days, let's just be professional in how we approach things and the one thing we have is motivated players. You know, I went recruiting a couple of days and to a man, they were in here working on their own because the practices are a little bit different. You know, we're not going as long, so guys are in getting shots up – and when I say getting shots up, I mean really working, not just in their street clothes, but dressed out and really getting after it.

"So you know, when I'm away and I call in and I hear I've got a gym full of guys really getting after it, that tells me all

I need to know about motivation and the character on our team."

On how he plans to handle the rest of next week's itinerary after Sunday's game to ensure his players get Christmas off:

"Well, we're going to practice on the 27th, so they'll come back on the 26th. If they live close by, they'll just come back on the 27th. They'll be off. What I'll tell them to do is you've got to work out when you're home and a lot of the guys are within driving distance, so they can work out here if they want to, you know, and they can work out with our strength guy if they want to and that's all on their own.

"But you know, there's a trust factor there that they're going to run, they're going to lift, they're going to get shots up and they're not going to come back here five pounds overweight after sitting in front of the TV for four days. They're just not wired that way."

On if the missed free throws against Iowa State by Marble and Gesell will lead to further issues with both of them:

"I don't worry about it. I mean, it's one of those things where they're good shooters and over the course of the season, their percentages are going to be good. Now, we always want them to make every shot and when Mike misses, you're shocked. Certain guys we have, if it doesn't go in, you're really surprised and Mike is one of those guys.

"You know, Dev, he shot 80 [percent] last year but he's down a little below 70 this year. But I think when it's all said and done, he'll be 75 or better. So I don't really talk about it. I don't address it. I always encourage them to get extra free-throw shooting in and we actually require it, especially over the break. So it will be addressed, but it will be addressed across the board."

On the importance of 3-point shooting Sunday against Arkansas-

Pine Bluff's 2-3:

"Well, I don't think you can come into a game and say we're going to need to make a ton of 3s because they're playing a 2-3 zone. You attack a zone in a variety of ways and 3-point shooting is one component of it.

"You've got to get the ball into the high post, you've got to get the ball to the baseline, you've got to drive and kick, you've got to get to the free-throw line, you've got to get stops, you've got to get points in transition. You know, things of that nature. But any time a team is playing zone, you're right, the 3-point shooting is going to be an important component."

On when he recruits, does he simply target the best players or look to fill specific voids:

"I think more open to the best player. I'm looking for impact. I'm looking for guys that without question can come in and help us and it doesn't mean they have to be a star. But they have to be impact. They have to be somebody I can put in a game and know what we're going to get based on their skill set and then those skill sets have to fit with what else we have in the program and what else we're trying to bring in.

"You know, I try not to stockpile one position if I can, if I could help it. But again, we happen to have guards who are versatile enough and then the same thing with our forwards. You know, you look at a guy like [Uthoff] and a guy like White, I can play those guys at the 2 and 3, I can play them at the 3 and 4, I can play them at 4 and 5, if I had to. That's great to be able to do that as a coach and quite honestly, they like it because they're not pigeon-holed into one spot and they're not labeled. They want to be able to go in-and-out, they want to be able to go up-and-down and so, that's kind of how we recruit.

"So when I'm looking at a guy, he has to be able to help us. I

mean, obviously we're hoping we can get a lottery pick and a first-team all-American. But at the very least, I want to be able to play him in a Big Ten game and have he'll be successful in helping us win games."

On whether Oglesby would be cutting into Peter Jok's minutes specifically:

"It's going to be hard to figure because 11 is harder than 10. There's no question about that. But there were times where I felt like we really needed Josh and there were times where I felt like, 'This is a really great opportunity for Pete.' So you know, it's obvious that Mike and Dev are our starters. But you know, you look at [Anthony] Clemmons and Oglesby and Peter Jok and those three guys can help us win games.

"We'll rotate them accordingly and you never know how foul trouble and God forbid future injury throughout the course of the season and anything like that could affect this team, so you know, the fact that we have versatility and depth is going to be critical."