

12/30/2013: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Monday prior to the 22nd-ranked Hawkeyes' game on Dec. 31 against Nebraska at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

On how practices have gone since the team reconvened following Christmas:

"Uh, you know, everything has been good. You know, we've had a chance to have opportunities to have meetings, film sessions, opportunities to get in the gym and shoot free throws, the opportunity to be together and have practice every day and I think their approach has been professional and we appear to be in good shape."

On how Nebraska has changed since Iowa played it last season:

"Well, they're a lot different. I mean, they just got a lot of new guys. I like their team. You know, obviously you know from last year, [Ray] Gallegos is a guy that, he made seven 3s against us here. I mean, he's a guy that is going to get your full attention. He's an upperclassman. Then you look at [Terran] Petteway and [Walter] Pitchford, I mean, two guys that were sitting out last year."

"You know, I've really been impressed with Petteway. He's one of the most explosive players in our league. Pitchford is a unique guy that can play out or in. [Shavon] Shields, I think,

has taken his game to the next level. I mean, you saw it in both games against us. He was very good. He's a sophomore now playing like an experienced guy and they've got some other pieces that you have to be impressed with. You know, [Tai] Webster and [Deverell] Biggs and [Benny] Parker.

"But you know, one of the more impressive new guys they also have is [Leslee] Smith. So you know, when you look at their top-name guys, five of them are new. But they've got size, they've got talent, they've got shooting. They can spread you out and they've got a lot of weapons."

On how Josh Oglesby looked in the days following his first game back last week:

"Yeah. He looks good."

On how Oglesby changes the way other teams have to prepare for Iowa:

"Well, it changes a lot of things because you know, you look at our team and say, 'Well, Zach [McCabe] and Jarrod [Uthoff] were shooting it really well and Mike [Gesell] and Dev [Marble] were shooting it well and scoring it.' And then you throw Josh into the mix. Obviously, we've talked about him at length. When he's shooting the ball well, he's phenomenal."

"But he's also not a mistake guy. He's a solid player in the backcourt that defends and then you look at Pete [Jok]'s numbers and he has still got really solid numbers and gives you another weapon there. It just takes a lot of the pressure off of particularly Marble and Aaron White, who are our key guys. You know, you look at the way Josh and Jarrod in particular are scoring it. It just gives you that much more to prepare for when you get ready for us."

On the importance of winning that first conference game, especially being at home:

"Well you know, I think we all look at it the same way, everyone who coaches in this league. You really have to protect your home court. Everybody knows that and at the same time, everybody looks at opportunity on the road. Can we go get a road win? We're going to have to play nine tough games. What kind of team do we have? Are we tough enough? Are we together? Can we deal with the crowd, because every place has an atmosphere that's impressive."

"You know, and that's what it is. When you get to the end, the ones that are able to do that are the ones that are still standing and still playing in March. So you know, it's a big test for us and one we'll be ready for."

On the importance of Adam Woodbury and if he believes Adam is getting more comfortable:

"You know, I think he's kind of doing what we all thought he would do. He's just getting better. You're absolutely right. He's much more comfortable. He's feeling good about himself physically. I think he's feeling good about what we expect from him, what we're asking him to do. He has always been a smart, tough player, so he's going to lock into the game plan and he's going to physically bang and not back down from anybody."

"But I think you're seeing him clearly more comfortable, whether he's near the basket trying to make a play for somebody or himself, or he's trying to make a play near the high post and I think you're seeing him have a lot more success. His confidence level is definitely higher."

On the three things he believes still need to be shored up in his mind:

"Well, I think you always want to look at consistency defensively because we know how talented teams are that are coming. All right, you can get by with some things defensively against some of the teams we've played, but obviously not

against some others.

"I think the other thing is execution late-game because you're anticipating being involved in a lot of close games late. Now that's also defense, offense, free-throw shooting, being in the right defense, everybody on the same page offensively, what we're doing, so I think from that standpoint.

"Then the other thing that we've got to do is really ... I think the key to our team is our depth. We've got to keep getting productivity out of a lot of people. We've got to stay healthy and we've got to take care of our bodies for the grind that's coming."

On what he expects from Jok in his first Big Ten game Tuesday and what impact his play against Nebraska could have on his minutes going forward:

"Well, I wouldn't look at it that way. I mean, I have great expectations for Pete. He has proven he can play at this level effectively. He'll have an opportunity to play tomorrow night and you know, how somebody plays is always going to translate into how much they play going forward. So he's going to be in the mix. He feels good about himself and I feel good about him."

On whether Tuesday's game against Nebraska could be challenging for Woodbury given the Cornhuskers' personnel:

"I think Adam will be fine. You know, Adam can move his feet and Adam understands the game plan and you know, he'll adjust to guarding a perimeter post-player just as he would a post-player that's going to be block to block. I think he'll be fine."

On the importance of having the depth he possesses going 11-deep as Iowa goes through the grind of Big Ten play:

"Well, it's crucial because, you know, we had guys that were

sick. I mean, nobody really knew that Aaron White was sick before our last game. Played anyway, but he wasn't himself. We've had other guys that had been sick, other guys that had minor injuries. Of course, Josh had the broken foot.

"But those things are going to continue. You hope they don't, but somebody's going to tweak their ankle, somebody's going to have a stomach virus, somebody's going to get a sinus infection, you know, and that takes its toll on a team that's 7-deep, or even if you're 8-deep. But if you're 11-deep, you can absorb it much better, especially if you're playing on the road and getting back late and things of that nature.

"Not only that, but the depth manifests itself in other ways. You've got to prepare for 11 guys. You don't know which five guys are going to be on the floor late and you don't know which guys are going to get hot on that particular day. So there are a lot of things that are positive in regard to having depth."

On if Tim Miles' approach permeates with Nebraska's players and how much Petteway changes things for the Cornhuskers:

"Petteway is really a unique player. I really like his game because he's just sort of relentless and he's multi-dimensional. So when you sort of have that attack mentality and you can get to the rim, that's one thing. But if you can also shoot 3s and you can also drive and dunk the ball and you can play in the half-court, you can play in transition, you know, that's a tough battle for any defense that's going to prepare for him, you know, throughout the season.

"I think Tim does a great job with him, but I think he also does with everybody else. This is Year Two, so he has recruited pieces that fit and you can see that they're playing the way he wants to play. I mean, you can see them all coming together for him and he likes this group.

"He has got some young guys that are really battling. He has

got experienced guys and granted, I mean, some of it is older guys that aren't necessarily experienced at Nebraska, but they've kind of been around the block and they're playing that way. So, you know, they're going to have a team that challenges everybody in our league, without question."

On how he tapers practices during Big Ten play as opposed to pre-season or non-conference to avoid burnout:

"That is a constant challenge for everybody who coaches at this level. You know, for me, what I've tried to do over the break is not kill them physically, but make sure that we have enough meetings, make sure that they eat three times a day, make sure they have enough opportunities to shoot free throws and then have a solid practice. So we'll get them together twice a day, but we'll only work them hard once a day. The other will be more mental.

"But you know, it's keeping them together and you know, continuing to build the camaraderie that we have within this program, which I think is very impressive. The guys really truly like each other, respect each other, cheer for each other, would help each other in any situation. You know, you always worry about we get three weeks in January before school starts and that's a long time.

"We've got a lot of games. We've got a lot of prep. But you also don't want to burn them out by grinding too much. So there will be times where I give them a session off and we'll bring them in late so they can sleep or we'll let them go early so they can go to a movie or something like that and we'll play that day by day."

On if he thinks Petteway being comparable to Marble is fair:

"I think it is, you know, because he's really crafty. You know, he kind of floats around and then he goes by you. He'll float around and you relax and he shoots a 3 right in your face. Then he gets a head of steam, raises up and dunks the

ball like any NBA all-star would do.

“So when you’re looking at him and you look at 6-6, 210-215 pounds or whatever he is, but he’s a handful. He plays the game I think at a great pace. You know, he really understands how to play. You understand how he fits in Tim’s system. Tim uses him really well, I think.

“You know, they set him up sometimes. Sometimes, he goes and gets over the zone. Sometimes, they set him up. Sometimes, it’s in transition. Sometimes, they go away from him for awhile and then they go back to him. He just really has a good feel and you know, it’s reflective in his numbers, I think.”