

1/3/2014: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery held a teleconference with the local media on Friday prior to the 22nd-ranked Hawkeyes' game on Jan. 5 against No. 4 Wisconsin at the Kohl Center in Madison, Wis.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

On what Wisconsin's Frank Kaminsky has done to improve his play this season:

"You know, I think Kaminsky was a really good player last year. I think he got set back when he got poked in the eye. It looked to me like he was really on his way and that set him back. He was still really good."

"You know, I think [Sam] Dekker has taken his game to the next level. They get [Josh] Gasser back and he was one of their best players for the previous two years. So you know, you plug back in a guy who was going to be one of your best players and he wasn't there. What happened was it opened the door for Trae Jackson to become what he has become, which is one of the best players in our league. So it really, I think in a lot of ways, it helped their team. It made them deeper."

"You look at five scorers, five 3-point shooters. But you know, I think when it's all said and done, you know, to me, you know, Dekker has really become a big time player. He was really good as a freshman and you knew he was going to be good, but you weren't sure how good he was going to be. He was

very good. O.K., now as a sophomore, he's one of the elite players in the country, forget about our league. I think that has had a lot to do with it, too."

On the difficulty of preparing for as many 3-point shooters as the Badgers have:

"Well, it's all spread out, you know, and they are I think in addition to the fact that they can all shoot 3s, they're all good passers. You know, they're not a turnover team. So you know, if you've got shooters, but you've got a couple of guys playing nuts, it doesn't matter. But you look at their assist-turnover numbers and they're just as impressive as their 3-point shooting. So that means they're sharing the ball. They give the ball up to each other. They put a premium on winning."

On how he prepares Jarrod Uthoff for what he'll face returning to Madison and how he expects him to handle it:

"You know, any time you go on the road, it's difficult. You know, in Jarrod's situation, ... I mean, they don't impact the game. They don't impact how he's going to perform. They can yell at him, but they can't come out and defend him. They can do whatever they want, but I'm not going to pay much attention to it."

"I mean, our fans have yelled at Ben [Brust] and that hasn't affected him. You know, fans I think ... I don't want to say they don't impact the game because they do, you know, in particular during momentum shifts and that's what you have to be careful about. You know, I'm more concerned about that. How do we handle their runs and how their crowd gets involved during the game more than, you know, some people yelling at Jarrod Uthoff."

On what his current relationship with Bo Ryan is like in light of both the Brust and Uthoff situations:

"It's interesting, you know. I mean, the reality is this – he's trying to get his team to win a national championship and we're trying to do the same thing. We play them twice, we're going to try and beat them twice, they're going to try and beat us twice. You know, you compete with them on the floor, you compete in recruiting and we're trying to win. It doesn't mean that you don't respect each person and the job that they're doing and it doesn't mean you can't be cordial. You know?"

"I mean, we weren't going to each other's house for Christmas dinner before and we're not doing that now. But that doesn't mean ... if I see him, we talk. You know, we're both from the same area, so there's no animosity. There's no dislike, you know, other than we're trying to beat them and they're trying to beat us. I think people really make more out of it than is there. There's really nothing there. But for some reason, people really want to keep talking about it and it doesn't make any sense to me."

On Iowa's recent success against Wisconsin and what his team has done effectively against the Badgers:

"Well you know, I think what we've done is we've played consistently well in those games. You know, we run a little bit. They're running a little more this year. I think we have locked into their style of play and trying to figure out how our style of play, you know, can be effective, even in that environment."

"You know, I don't think there's anything overly scientific to it, to be honest with you. I don't want to, you know, overdramatize some brilliant scheme that we've come up with. I don't think that's it at all. You know, I think we've played hard, we've played tough. I think we go into the game respecting what they do and how they do it and take the time to figure out how they do it and try to combat that."

"We've had some success and have also lost some games. So we'll go up there with a solid game plan and an intensity level that we will hopefully be successful."

On how much Gasser's return to the Badgers changes what they do now as opposed to a year ago:

"Well like I said, I think it helps them in two areas because by being out, it helped Trae Jackson develop into the player he has become and when Josh came back, he didn't miss a beat, which you didn't think he would because he's too good. You know, you look at that team and say, 'Well, they've lost some guys.' But they're all juniors and seniors. Sam Dekker's a sophomore, but he's one of the best players in the country, so you know, that's a different animal there."

"Now off the bench, they've got a little bit more inexperience, but they've got some good players. So you know, if you have good players, it doesn't matter what year they are and if you're playing, then you're understanding and comprehending that system and how they want to play and you're fitting in and fulfilling a role. Whatever that role is and how it's defined will determine, you know, how much you play and how effective you are. All five starters are tremendous and the guys they've got coming off the bench have been effective."

On if he senses any extra fire in Uthoff for playing this game:

"You know, I would hope he would bring the same fire every game. I don't know why there would be any extra. You know, here's a guy who wants to be a good player, who wants to be on a team that wins a championship and go to the NCAA Tournament, and that's the next game on our schedule. I would like to think he'd play the same way against Nebraska, the same way against Wisconsin, the same way against Northwestern and right on down the line."

On the challenge of playing a top five team on the road like Iowa will this weekend:

"Well you know, it's an opportunity to play a ranked opponent on the road. It won't be the last. They're going to have the same amount of opportunities. It will be an unbelievably difficult environment, but we've played in front of those already and we're going to play in a lot more. So I mean, to me, it's just another opportunity to see where we are."

"I mean, if you play the No. 4 team in the country, who is undefeated, on the road in a hostile environment, that will identify who we are. You know, can we play against a really good team and consistently compete to where we can win that game? If you win that game, then obviously it has great impact on how you're viewed, you know, what your abilities are to win a championship, what your résumé is moving forward."

"But at the same time, you know, if you can grow individually, you know, let's say you don't win. Well, can you make progress? Can you say we played well, certain guys played well, certain guys made progress? You know, it's all part of the journey. So you know, you don't want to make too much out of it if you win and you don't want to make too much out of it if you lose because we have more opportunities exactly like this one coming and so do they."

On the challenges Wisconsin's Nigel Hayes presents:

"He's a really good player. I mean, I really like him. I've really been impressed with him. You have to be and I think what you're seeing is a guy that, as a freshman game-by-game is just getting more and more confidence and he's a little different than some of the other guys and I think that's good, too, for them. So it is a challenge for us to have a powerful body like that and who is capable of putting those kinds of numbers up. It really gives them another weapon that we have to prepare for."

On the importance of controlling the boards and not allowing offensive rebounds:

"Well, I think anybody that's going to beat them has to rebound. You know, here's a team that's basically starting ... well, they're starting at least three guards. You know, Dekker will be a guard in the pros, I think, although he can score inside obviously. He's powerful. And Kaminsky is a jump-shooting center, yet their rebounding numbers are phenomenal.

"You know, they rebound and then find each other and a lot of times, they make 3s off of those kinds of situations. So it's going to have great impact on the game. Who rebounds? Who outrebounds the other team?"

On if there are still instances where Uthoff struggles with aggression and how he'd go about fixing it:

"Well, we just talk to him about it all the time and just keep encouraging him to be aggressive, to attack the rim, to shoot the 3. You know, he's just a really efficient player. He's a very unselfish player. He's an efficient guy in terms of, 'All right, I should pass it if that's what this play requires. I should drive it. I should move it on.' You know, he doesn't necessarily think of the game in terms of I'm going to go get mine.

"So there's I think a ... there has got to be a balance there where he recognizes that we want and our team needs him at times to think a little more that way and shoot. When you look at his shooting percentages, and that's indicative of who he is, he's shooting unbelievably well. His numbers are unbelievable because he feels like I'm taking nothing but really good shots.

"You know sometimes, we would like to play the game with a little bit more reckless abandon. I think as the season goes on, I think you'll see that."

On Uthoff looking at approaching this as “just another game”:

“Yeah and I think that’s the way he is looking at it.”

On the importance of both Adam Woodbury and Gabe Olaseni being able to defend a center like Kaminsky:

“Well, very important because you know, Kaminsky can take you down low and score too now. That’s the thing with him. He’s not just a jump-shooting center. He has the ability to go out there and make six in a game, which he did once.”

“So those guys, they’ve got their hands full because he’s crafty in the post, he floats around the perimeter some. You know, he has got good hands and good feet and he rebounds. So I mean, he has proven he is one of the better players in our league, so whenever you have somebody of that caliber, it puts a lot of pressure on the guys guarding him.”

On if he’s concerned about the struggles Mike Gesell had in Iowa’s previous game against Nebraska:

“You know, he was good in the beginning. You know, he wasn’t good in the second half. Yeah, that concerns me. It always concerns me. But you get back to work, you bring him in, you show him film and you talk to him and you stress things in practice and you get it figured out. So in terms of that, no, I’m not concerned.”

On if he has done anything differently with free-throw shooting during the past few practices:

“Uh, we just ... at this time of year, we’ve got a lot of time. So we typically shoot a lot of free throws this time of year, which we do and we did the last couple of days. We did a couple of different drills, you know, just to hopefully get a little more focus on them than to just shoot them. That’s about the only thing we did differently.”