

1/20/2014: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery's teleconference on Monday with the Big Ten media:

McCaffery's opening statement:

"This was our bye week. We only had one game. I thought, you know, we played as well as we could play yesterday against a very good Minnesota team. I was really impressed with them in every tape I watched. But I think it's just typical of what this league is.

"Obviously this week coming up, two road games against a first-place team in Michigan and a team that's playing really well right now in Northwestern, so we've got a lot of work to do this week."

On Mike Gesell developing into a more aggressive point guard:

"You know what, I think he has got the ability to be a really special player. You know, I think he's just one of those guys that he's so conscientious. He's such a team guy. He wanted to run the offense and get his teammates involved and, you know, wants to win.

"But what I'm trying to get him to understand is that we need him to be more aggressive. We need him to be more of a scorer. We need him to have that mentality for us to be the best team we can be and we'll have a better chance to win. You know, if he would just trust his talent and go be aggressive.

"You know, if you think about a guy who has played 18 games, he has 21 turnovers. That's pretty amazing, you know, so he's clearly conscientious with the basketball, but sometimes, I want him to just go and make a play because he has that ability. I've seen it and we're better when he does it."

On whether the decision to move Gesell to point and Devyn Marble off ball has paid off:

"Well, I think it has been great for Dev because you know, we give him the ball and move him off the ball. I think he likes that and he's really good in that role. I think it was better for Mike to have it. You know, we essentially recruited him to be that guy and then we moved him off the ball, which he willingly accepted. Not a lot of guys can do that. You know, it's like, 'Whatever you need me to do, I'll do.'

"But as we continued to evaluate it, we just felt like we need to get Dev more shots and give him the ball at different locations and we need to put the ball in Mike's hands, let him engineer it and go ahead. The other thing is when it's all said and done, they both can still score. They both can shoot 3s, they both can drive it, they both have a pull-up game, so they are tough to guard."

On how much of a challenge Michigan's Nik Stauskas will present Iowa on Wednesday:

"You know what, it's a tremendous challenge for anybody who plays them. I think you make a great point. He has been impressive because let's face it, last year was Trey Burke's team. You could say it was Trey Burke's and Tim Hardaway's team."

"Both of those guys were so good for the time that they were there and I think, you know, for Stauskas, he got a chance to experience that and then as you move to the next year, you figure it was going to be, you know, his team and Glenn Robinson's team and even [Mitch] McGary. Of course he's not

there right now. He'll be back.

"But Stauskas is the guy that said, 'Look, I watched as those guys led. I watched them make plays in crunch time. I can do that.' See, I didn't see him strictly as a shooter last year. You know, obviously his role is different. But I mean, he's athletic. He has got a great handle. He can go off the dribble. He moves without the ball. You know, he's a gamer. So I think he's just doing more of it than shoot."

On how Stauskas' shooting range opens the offense up for others:

"Well, the other thing is, you know, he shoots it off the dribble. You know, he's not catch-and-shoot. He's not stand-still from that range you're talking about. You know, he can hit a step-back 3 off a double cross-over. You know, if you don't find him in transition, it's almost automatic. But when you run at him, he can put it on the deck.

"He made a play in the Wisconsin game where he drove it and kicked it. I mean, it was a really, really good play. I mean, you think he's definitely going to shoot the ball in this situation and then the next thing you know, he has got an assist and that's the way that great ones play."

On the versatility being provided this season by Jarrod Uthoff:

"The thing for him and how it relates to our team is, you know, at some point, you need other scorers consistently besides Marble and [Aaron] White. You know, and we have many candidates on this team. Obviously Gesell, [Zach] McCabe, [Melsahn] Basabe, Uthoff. But he has probably been the most consistent because of his versatility that you pointed out.

"You know, he has got a terrific 3-point shot. He has got a pull-up game. He can get to the rim, he can finish with either hand. His length impacts the game. Big time block yesterday on

a 3-point shot. He does rebound. So you can play him in different positions and it gives me the versatility to move people around.

"I can post him up, I can pop him out. I mean, I can do a lot of things with him and that's really how he wants to play and I think he's a perfect fit for our team and our style of play."

On how impressed he has been with Uthoff's play to this point:

"You know, I'm not as surprised as you might think simply because I watched him practice every day last year, so I saw all the things we just talked about. So the only thing that remains is, you know, can he do it when the TV lights come on?"

"If you know him, he sort of has that kind of personality that, you know, nothing really phases him. You know, nothing bothers him. He just kind of plays and the moment, the crowd, road, home, you know, he's going to do what he does. He makes a mistake, it doesn't linger with him. You know, he has got a great temperament for this game."

On what he notices John Beilein doing differently this season given the pieces from last year he doesn't have:

"I think, you know, if you look at John over the years, he's one of the best coaches of our generation and the numbers bare that out. He's going to stick with his style of play. They play a certain way. They can beat you in the half-court. They can beat you in transition. They're going to guard you. You know, his offense is really sound. It's not easy to guard."

"I mean, he's going to plug the people into those positions and he's going to go to those guys. I mean if you watch, let's go back to the Wisconsin game, you could see where he was going late and then he leaves it up to them – are they going to go shoot or make a play?"

"So he puts them in a position to be successful and I think what that does is it provides those players with the necessary confidence they need to go out and do the things that they're doing."