

# 1/31/2014: 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 15th-ranked Hawkeyes' game on Feb. 1 against Northwestern at the State Farm Center in Champaign, Ill.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

**On how much Illinois' Rayvonte Rice has developed since he was playing at Drake:**

*"Well, I thought he was tremendous at Drake. I mean, to me, you know, he's in incredible shape physically. I mean, I think he has really, you know, committed himself to getting in the weight room. I mean, he's really powerful."*

*"But I mean, his game is the same in terms of he can shoot the 3 from range, he can put it on the deck, go either way, he can post up, he can play traffic. You know, he rebounds the ball. I mean, he does a lot of things to help your team win and he's one of the leading scorers in our league."*

**On if he makes his players cognizant of Iowa's futility against the Fighting Illini on the road:**

*"Yeah, I don't think anybody pays any attention to, you know, what happened 11 years ago."*

**On what he thinks of the low amount of shots taken by Aaron White in recent games:**

*"I mean, that's his choice. He can shoot it whenever he wants. He knows that. You know, when you're one of the team's best players, you're going to be closely guarded. So he opted to move the ball on. You know, we posted him and got him to the free-throw line."*

*"You know, they were really getting back, so he didn't have as many transition opportunities as he would've liked. A lot of times, he gets shots there. But you know, that's pretty much up to him. I mean, if he wants to shoot the ball 20 times, he can."*

**On what he has seen that has led to Illinois entering Saturday's game having lost six straight:**

*"They're playing good teams. I mean, that's really all it is."*

**On the team's mental toughness in recent practices after he questioned it and whether the run of futility in Champaign will make team mentally sharper:**

*"I don't think that matters at all. I think, you know, we have tremendous respect, you know, for this program. They were in the NCAA Tournament last year. They were, you know, ranked a couple of weeks ago. They've lost to some good teams in our league and we didn't play well at times against Michigan State. I mean, I think we did a lot of good things, you know, when you break the film down."*

*"So we just have to focus on what do we have to do to get better and what do we have to do to combat Illinois. What do they bring to the table? I mean, what kind of team do they have? What are they going to do us defensively? What are they going to try to do to us offensively? I mean, nothing changes there. So it's nothing unique."*

**On whether he's encouraged by Anthony Clemmons' play recently and if he believes he's getting back on the right track:**

*"Very much so and I figured he would. He has practiced well. He's a character guy. He wants to compete. He wants to be a great teammate. The thing that has been a little bit surprising is he hasn't shot the ball as much. I mean, he has always been a guy who comes into the game and scores and that's one of the things I've always liked about him. He'll shoot the 3, he'll drive the ball and it's one of the things I've talked to him about."*

*"I want him to be his old, aggressive self, which he hasn't been and sometimes that happens when there are some games where you don't get as many minutes. So what I try to do is help talk him through it."*

#### **On how different Illinois is compared to last season:**

*"Well, they're dramatically different because the personnel is almost completely different, if you think about it. I mean, they have so many guys that are gone."*

*"You had [D.J.] Richardson and [Brandon] Paul and [Tyler] Griffey and [Sam] McLaurin. You know, you still have [Tracy] Abrams and [Joseph] Bertrand, you know, two very good players. Rice was sitting out and he's one of the best players in our league. You have another graduate transfer. [Nnanna] Egwu's back. He was there last year and he has added 20 pounds and then you have a bunch of freshmen, all of whom are very talented. So a dramatically different roster."*

*"You know, John [Groce] is doing a lot of the same things. You know, he has obviously changed it a little bit, but you know, they're going to mix defenses – play some man, play some zone. He lets his guys play. They run a lot of ball screen action and they'll be well prepared."*

#### **On the Big Ten's depth this year with nine teams possessing four or more losses halfway through the league slate:**

*"Well, if you would listen to what I've been saying from the*

beginning, it's exactly what I expected. There is no league in the country that is as good top to bottom as our league. You know, as we sit today, don't Northwestern and Wisconsin have the same amount of wins?

"But I've been saying that since the summer time. You know, [Drew] Crawford's coming back, [JerShon] Cobb's coming back. You look at Penn State with [Tim] Frazier and [D.J.] Newbill and you know, you say, 'Well, I didn't think they'd beat Ohio State.' Those two guys are as good as any backcourt combination in the country and Pat [Chambers] has added some other pieces.

"I mean, you go team-by-team. I mean, Terran Petteway is as good as any player in the country, you know, and I knew that. I knew those guys [Nebraska] had sitting out last year and I knew who they had coming back. You know, I think a lot of times, you come into a season and everybody is like, 'Well, look who they lost. They're not going to be any good.' It's all a function of who they brought in and who they have sitting out. So I mean, it's not, to me, surprising that the league is kind of unfolding as it is."

**On if Michigan State took anything away in Iowa's half-court the Hawkeyes were able to do previously against Northwestern or if it was more a function of match-ups:**

"You know, I think you make an interesting point in terms of teams really focusing on stopping our break because normally, teams won't do that because it typically limits offensive rebounding. Like, when you're dropping three or you're dropping four, you're not sending those guys to the glass. Michigan State did a little bit more than Northwestern.

"So in theory, we should've had a dominant rebounding advantage – like we did against Northwestern – against Michigan State, which we did in the first half. But in the second half, they went to the glass more and that was one of

*the disappointing things about that game.*

*"In terms of the half-court, both very physical, both very aggressive teams. You know, Michigan State may be a little bit more aggressive and maybe a little bit quicker overall. That would be the one difference. But you know, I think we had some great opportunities to take a lead from three to five, from five to seven. We couldn't get the key stops we needed."*

**On how he thinks his team will bounce back from Tuesday's loss to Michigan State:**

*"Well, we won't know until we play. I mean, they're fine. They're always fine. We'll have to see how we play."*

**On whether he thinks Michigan State's Gary Harris is the Big Ten's best all-around player after Tuesday's game:**

*"I think you could argue that. I think what he has done is, you know, certainly put himself in position to be, you know, a first-team all-conference player and I think, you know, if you think about all the things you just said, I think what has happened is I think in terms of the NBA, they are looking at him a lot differently and I think they've been more and more impressed. There are more guys coming to look at him and that, to me, was to be expected.*

*"You know, I just want to continue to play with that level of intensity, that level of concentration. It's very difficult to do what he does at both ends of the floor with the energy level he does it with. You know, that's one of the things that has impressed me about Gary Harris and that's one of the things that, you know, people talk about when they talk about him being a lottery pick. You know, that he does play both ends.*

*"He's not just a scorer and I think, you know, when you look at Devyn Marble, you have to say the same things. He's not just a scorer, plus he's a legitimate point guard. He's having*

*a spectacular year. I expect him to have a spectacular year and I'm happy for him."*

**On what his reaction was to hearing President Obama wanted to watch his team's game against Michigan State on Tuesday before delivering the State of the Union address:**

*"Well, I know the President is a huge basketball fan and that, to me, it meant a lot because he's really in tune with what's going on and for him to think that much of our team and that game – especially in light of what he was getting ready to do – is pretty amazing.*

*"You know, I've gotten to know and have known Craig Robinson for a long time. Obviously, he's the brother of the First Lady. We go on the Nike trip and we talk about how the President loves to play whenever he comes to town. When he came to town, I reached out to Craig to see if [President Obama] wanted to play.*

*"He was coming through Iowa City and he was ripping and running during election season, so he didn't really want to do that at the time. But I'd really like to meet him sometime, but obviously, he's really busy."*

**On if he would agree with the assessment of his team's half-court defense improving over the past month:**

*"I would. I would and you know, I think what you have is an experienced team that recognizes that's required. First of all, it's required because that's what teams are doing to us and we're playing really talented teams. I thought, you know, pretty much across the board, it has been excellent.*

*"You know, I thought at Michigan was just O.K., but as upset as I was with some things the other night, our half-court defense was very good and we pointed that out to the guys when we watched film and made sure they understood a lot of the things we set out to do, we most certainly did against a very*

*good team."*