

2/7/2014: 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 17th-ranked Hawkeyes' game on Feb. 8 against No. 10 Michigan at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

On Michigan's offense and its ability to score as efficiently as it has during Big Ten play:

"Well, they have multiple scorers. I mean, they really can score the ball. They've got shot-makers, they've got 3-point shooters. I mean, they probably have the most weapons of any team in the league."

On what he believes are the biggest areas of both improvement and regression since losing to Michigan the first time around:

"Uh, I don't know if ... I don't know if I can say that, you know. I mean, I don't know if we've improved or regressed in any area. I think we've stayed about the same, to be honest with you."

On if the losses at home to Michigan State and Ohio State were a matter of both inflicting their wills on Iowa as aggressors:

"Uh, you know what, I just think they're good. I don't think it's anything more than that. You know, they're good enough to win on the road and they have good players and, you know, they shot it. I mean, Ohio State shot the ball and Michigan State

shot the ball and we didn't. I don't think it's anything more complicated than that."

On what he has seen from Michigan's Derrick Walton since he was limited the last time Iowa and Michigan met:

"I really like him. You know, in the beginning of the year, I wasn't sure. You know, they were making comparisons right off the bat to Trey Burke and I thought that was a little bit unfair. That was the National Player of the Year and you know, I watched him against Iowa State. I thought he was pretty good. There was somebody else I watched him against and I thought he was pretty good.

"But I'm going to tell you what, he's special, I think. I mean, I think the way he played on the road at Michigan State tells you what you need to know about him. But what makes him special is the fact that, you know, he's really quick and he can get to the rim and he can make plays for himself or other people.

"But he can also shoot the 3, so that makes him a tough cover, especially when you add in that he's playing alongside [Glenn] Robinson, [Caris] LaVert, [Nik] Stauskas and [Zak] Irvin, with two centers that shoot seemingly over 80 percent."

On if practices have solely been gearing for Michigan or if there are other areas his team's working to improve on:

"We shifted right to getting ready for Michigan. Every day, we're working on things that we need to improve on based on, you know, maybe some things we didn't like in the last game or something like that. But you know, every practice has transition components, offense, defense, out of bounds, pressing, you know, offense, defense, shooting.

"Every practice encompasses every aspect of the game and every aspect of the game that we're trying to improve in. But you know, it will be specifically geared towards the things that

we think we need to do to beat Michigan."

On the difficulty of defending someone like Stauskas when he's being effective in ways beyond scoring:

"Well, it's tough because of how good the other players are. You know, when you take a team's leading scorer and he clearly has put winning above anything else, so, 'If I need to get 25 [points], I'll get 25. If I need to get eight assists, I'll get eight assists, and I'll figure it out and I'll execute that part of it and we'll win,' you know, that says a lot about him.

"It says a lot about John [Beilein]. It says a lot about, you know, the culture that they have. You know, a very unselfish team. I mean, any game, you could pick any number of seven or eight different guys who could be the leading scorer."

On the impact Zach McCabe has had on him and on the program in his four seasons at Iowa:

"Well, I just love Zach McCabe. I mean, he has been everything I hoped he would be. You know, he gives us a dimension that we need because he's a tough guy who can play in the post, who can play on the perimeter, who can handle the ball, who typically plays well in crunch time – whether it's free-throw shooting or, you know, mistake-free basketball, knowing where to be. A very intelligent, cerebral player.

"But you know you're going to get everything he has got and even he has got an off-shooting night, which he had the other night, he can still be an effective player and I think that's what makes him special. You know, I love coaching him.

"He brings energy to practice every day. He's a captain. He leads. You know, he sets a great example for the young guys and he's a great teammate. So you know, he has been here every step of the way that I've been here and when he's gone, I can tell you right now I'm going to miss him a lot."

On the limited number of minutes Gabe Olaseni typically plays in the second halves of games:

"You know, it will be a function of a lot of different things. You know, I don't think you can just break down that way. You know, what kind of game is it? Who are we playing against? What lineup do they have on the floor? What's the score? I mean, he has played extremely well and little by little, we'll get him more and more minutes. But in terms of who's on the floor in the last five minutes, you know, you really got to look at a lot of different factors."

On Peter Jok playing consecutive games for the first time in league play and whether he's making a concerted effort to get Jok minutes now at this point in the season:

"I think that's a fair assessment, but I would take it a little further. It's me trying to reward him for how he has competed. When his playing time went in the other direction, he kept battling and he put really good practices back to back and he sent the message that, 'Hey, I want to play.' I said from the beginning sometimes it's hard to get 11 in. We've done it. It's easier to get 10 in."

"But I felt like with our struggles offensively the other night that he would've been a good fit in that game. I thought he was really good and I thought it was good for him to be in there at the time he was in there and just get comfortable again. The kid deserves to play and I've got to find a way to get him in there."

On what makes him confident his team can respond to a little adversity like what it's currently dealing with:

"Well, because we have, you know, before. You know, I think this will be a big test. I mean, we're playing the first-place team in the league. We haven't lost two games in a row all year and we've responded every time we've gotten beaten. So we'll see. But I like our professionalism in terms of our

approach to losses in terms of how we respond in practice and how we respond in film sessions and everybody stays pretty positive. So, we'll see."

On if anything changes at this point in the season as a result of two straight home losses:

"Well, you change things every game in terms of what you're focusing on and what you're going to run and how you're going to play defensively and then as the game goes on, you typically change that, you know, because the game might not go exactly as you thought. So you're constantly making adjustments, whether it's Xs and Os or personnel. I mean, we're always doing that."

On not getting too caught up in losses to teams like Michigan State and Ohio State at home:

"Well, I think what you have to do is you have to be respectful of your opponent and you know, I don't ever panic and I don't want my guys to panic. You know, it's ... you know, we lost to two teams that were preseason top five in the country. Now I would've liked to have beaten them at home. We did beat one on the road. We have another shot at the other one. You know, we have played pretty well, otherwise."

"I think the thing that concerns everybody is the quality of this league top to bottom. You know, it's not like, 'Well, if we somehow survive this playing three ranked teams back to back.' You're going to play Indiana, who beat Michigan, and you're going to play Penn State, who beat Ohio State. That's what our league is, so you don't ever panic. You just got to keep coaching them up. You keep teaching, you keep trying to get better, we keep watching film, we keep getting on the floor and you can overanalyze."

"I mean, you could argue, 'O.K., maybe we're not the best 3-point shooting team in the country.' We usually don't shoot 3-for-20. You know, we won [at Ohio State] and everyone was

saying our zone was great. I thought it was O.K. They missed shots. You know, they came in here and everyone says we should've played more zone. We played zone and they made shots. It's a different game.

"You got to give your opponent credit. [Sam] Thompson makes two 3s, [Aaron] Craft makes two 3s, Lenzelle Smith – who has always been a great 3-point shooter – was in a little bit of a slump. He's back shooting the ball. I mean, you know, two seniors and a junior who are good players. On to the next."

On if he senses confidence within his own team right now given its approach:

"Well, I think they have a lot of confidence in themselves. You know, I think if you look at our season so far, even in our losses, we have played very well in stretches. You know, we haven't really gotten, you know, beaten badly by anybody.

"You know, you're always going to say, 'Well boy, our free-throw shooting has been a problem at times.' There's no question about that. But we haven't really, you know, mistaked our way into bad losses.

"You know, you look and say, 'Well geez, we gave up too many offensive rebounds in the second half against Michigan State.' O.K. Yeah, we did. But they're also a very good offensive rebounding team. I mean, you know, one of the best. So you know, you've got to be realistic and try to continue to get better, like I've been saying."