

2/14/2014: 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 16th-ranked Hawkeyes' game on Feb. 15 against Penn State at Bryce Jordan Center in State College, Pa.

Below is the complete transcript from the interview:

On how Penn State's guard duo of Tim Frazier and D.J. Newbill complement each other:

"Well, they both do everything. That's the interesting thing, that either one can bring it down. Either one can play with ball screens. Either one can come off of screens. Either one can lead the break. They can guard different size players and I think that's what makes them so difficult. I mean, they're weapons every time they have the ball in their hand."

On if he would agree with Devyn Marble's assessment earlier in the week about Newbill being a better shooter this season playing the off-guard:

"Well you know, it's interesting. He shot it really well against us both times, you know, but his percentages this year are like he shot it against us last year. I mean, he was ... I think last year was good for him because when Timmy got hurt, you know, they put the ball in his hands and he had to do so much, you know, to carry that team and now, he's doing a lot of the same things, but he doesn't have to do it as much because he has got a lot more help."

"I mean, they've got scorers in a number of different positions and they haven't had that before. I think that's what makes them hard to guard and I think, you know, it helps Newbill out."

On if Penn State's play is a reflection of its head coach, Pat Chambers:

"Well, I think, you know, Pat is an intense guy and he gets his guys to play. But you know, I think, you know, he has developed a culture that, you know, that's how they're going to play. I mean, he has kind of recruited players that he knows will fit, you know, what he's looking for. He has had a little bit of time now, you know, to do that."

"Um, I think it helped that he inherited Frazier because they're, you know, very similar in that sense. Frazier has been a good leader. Even when he was hurt last year, he was. But the guys that Pat has brought in, I mean, they're going to battle you and they're going to reflect his personality. No question."

On how key the week between games was for his team given how the Big Ten currently looks:

"You know, I don't know. You know, you always look forward to it. You always want a little bit of rest. You always want to get guys that are a little bit banged up to have some time. But you know, we're pretty healthy at the time and we're playing well."

"You know, it just kind of hits you funny because you kind of get into the mode where you're playing twice a week and sometimes now you have to play three times a week. So, I don't know how I feel about it. I don't know if it's good or bad. I'm kind of indifferent towards it. It's just kind of like, we get a bye and other teams get a bye, you deal with it and go play the next game. I don't really look at it as a positive or a negative."

On how spring recruiting looks at the moment and whether he believes the two open scholarships Iowa has will be filled:

"Well you know, I suspect we'll fill at least one of them, maybe two. We've got, you know, some offers out on the table. There are guys that we're looking at. Uh, I wouldn't be opposed to a transfer if that presented itself and made sense for us. You know, I think it's nice to be able to go into the spring with two scholarships. I'm feeling really good about who we have coming back and the two guys we've signed. Uh, so we've got some flexibility, so it's not like we're in panic mode.

"You know, we don't have a lot of offers out. You know, we really have very few and most of the guys we're offering are juniors. That's the thing you have to weigh, you know. Do we really need to bring a guy in this year or can we wait and, you know, feel as though the quality of guys we're looking at are really good.

"But again, you know, there are times when you say, 'O.K., we're looking for a certain fit and if a guy fits, then we offer.' It's the only way I'm able to, you know, make sense in recruiting the kid, to be able to tell him, 'Look, this is the position that we need. This is the skill set that we're graduating and you can come in and help us.'"

On the decline in freshmen playing in the Big Ten this season across the board:

"No. I don't think there's any reason at all other than, you know, it just fell that way. You know, teams had guys coming back and had guys sitting out and that's why I've been saying from the beginning that this league is going to be the best it has ever been. You know, it's kind of comical that people want to criticize it. But you know, we just have the best league top to bottom. You know, it's not even close."

On if Penn State is indicative of the Big Ten's depth this

season:

"Oh, you know, I said it last year. I mean, you know, they only won two league games, but they beat the team that was in the national championship game with their best player out for the season. With him back and with who they've recruited and the young kids that Pat had brought in, you knew they were going to be better."

"They're 4-8. They easily could have seven wins. Easily have seven wins and be sitting right next to us. The Purdue loss on the road, the Minnesota loss at home and the Indiana loss at home. But again, that goes back to what this league is. You know, that stuff often times evens out over time. So every night you take the floor, you know you have a formidable opponent with a great coach and great players and you're just trying to get ready and play your best."

On what impressed him the most about Penn State's comeback win at Indiana this week:

"Well, it's the second time they've done it. I mean, they were down 10 against Ohio State, too. You know, so it's what we've already been talking about. I mean, they don't quit. They're going to keep coming, you know, and it happens a lot."

"You know, you'll see games where they get down 10-12 and the next thing you know, they're up three. You know, they're just not going away. They're the epitome of a team you've got to beat. You know, they're not going to, you know, make so many mistakes that you just kind of back into a win against them. I mean, you've got to beat them."

On if maturity factors into the success Iowa has had on the road this season and if he sees that continuing to be a factor over the next month:

"Well, I think it's just experience. I mean, we've been through it and you know, we were so close last year a number

of times and you learn from it and you get more guys playing well. You get more guys with experience and if you're going on the road in this league, it's going to take guys that have been through it. It's going to be really hard to do it with a really, really young team."

On why he's pursuing a third point guard to add to next year's roster along with Mike Gesell and Anthony Clemmons:

"Any time you recruit somebody, it's because they bring a particular skill set that's different from what you have. It's the only way, you know, to do it and I don't look at it ... you know, if I offer somebody, I'm looking at them as a guard who can play or a forward who can play or just a guy who can play, who can play more than one position. Uh, that's kind of how I look at it.

"You know, I don't pigeonhole. You know, I think we're beyond, you know, the 1-2-3-4-5 numbering system. That's obsolete."