

# 2/17/2014: 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:**

*"I was really pleased with our week. You know, when you go into a bye week after playing well, you're not exactly sure how you're going to play in the next game."*

*"Obviously, you know, with the way Penn State was playing, you know, they had our full attention and to have the skill to go on the road and win our fourth road game in a very difficult league is something we feel really good about. But we certainly recognize where the league is right now and how good it is top to bottom and how good we're going to have to play the rest of the way."*

## **On if the Big Ten's depth could have ramifications – good or bad – when the NCAA Tournament seeding is determined:**

*"You know, on the surface, I'd say I don't think so. I mean, I don't know. I don't sit down and crunch the numbers. But it would appear that, you know, I guess a win may not have as much impact, but certainly a loss won't have as much impact either because you know, every team has really good wins and every team seems to have a couple of losses where, as you said, they got dinged."*

*"But to me, there's nothing surprising. I think it makes our*

league that much more unique. I mean, every other league has got bad teams. We don't have any bad teams, so what you're going to see is exactly what you're seeing, you know, and at the end of this thing, somebody's going to win the league. I don't know who that is right now because every night, you have to bring your A game.

"You can't ... you cannot bring your B game, no matter who you are in this league, and expect to win. You're probably going to get embarrassed. It's that simple and I think that's the challenge for all of us moving forward. You know, can we be mentally ready and physically ready and have the correct amount of toughness to win, especially on the road."

**On if he felt his team would get back in the Big Ten title discussion or if he even gave that much thought:**

"Truthfully, I didn't give it much thought. If there was ever a time to truly focus on the next game, which we tend to say all the time, it's this year in this league. You know, you can't look down the road. You can't look at standings. You have to look at your next opponent."

**On Indiana's Yogi Ferrell being a better scorer this season than he was last year as a freshman:**

"I mean, he has been impressive to me. I mean obviously, he was a very good player last year. His role was different. You know, you got [Cody] Zeller and [Victor] Oladipo and [Christian] Watford, etc.

"You know, they had so many weapons and this year, he's the guy and that's a much more difficult transition than I think that people think when all of a sudden ... I mean, you were a guy who can score, but you were facilitating and engineering victory and now you got to go make sure your team wins by scoring, rebounding, defending and distributing. I mean, that's a very difficult task and I think he has done it really well.

*"Little by little, you're seeing this young guys that Tom [Crean] has developed and you know, they're able to do that because they know they've got one of the best players in the country with the ball."*

**On if knowing his team hasn't been blown out in any games yet this season is an indicator of how disciplined his players are:**

*"I'd sort of like to think so. I mean, that was something that I felt like coming into the season that we could do, you know, with the experience we had. You know, we weren't in the NCAA Tournament last year, but we had a deep run in the NIT. So we played extra games, we played overseas."*

*"You know, we've got a really impressive senior class who have been through a lot, a junior class that's terrific, you know, a sophomore class having great touch and you know, I think there's an understanding of what it takes in this league to go on the road and compete, to try to protect your home court."*

*"I mean, even when we've lost, we lost to Michigan State in overtime, Ohio State we went down to the wire. We couldn't make a 3, but you know, somehow figured a way to battle and to stay in and I think that's what you have to do. You got to at least be in position to win if you're going to win."*

**On if his team's toughness has improved since that overtime loss to Michigan State last month:**

*"I don't think there's any question about it and I think that's one of the reasons why I talked as vocally about it as I did. It's not something you normally say publicly because it's not something I expected to see and we hadn't seen it prior to that and we haven't seen it since. So I think that shows the level of maturity that you're talking about."*

**On why foul shooting hasn't improved with other areas of basketball over the years:**

*"I think it's real simple. I mean, the game has changed so much in so many ways that that's one thing, if you think about it, I mean, it's exactly the same as it was 50 years ago. You step to the line and you know, you get to shoot a free shot."*

*"You know, the only thing you might think of is there are more people attacking the basket. Rules change from the 50s and 60s when they used to shoot one-shot fouls, things of that nature. But you know, you're looking at about the same number of fouls being committed and you have good players shooting."*

*"You know, as a college player, you're expected to be in the 70s. I think it's really hard to shoot the 90s and most good athletes who are on scholarship at the Division-I level aren't going to shoot in the 50s and 60s. You're going to have a few of them. So I don't think there's anything out of the ordinary to look at. I just think it's the same shot, you know, being shot by talented athletes at about the same percentage."*

**On if free-throw shooting is emphasized heavily now with the NCAA Tournament drawing near:**

*"It's something that we emphasize all the time. You know, we had a stretch where we were struggling and everybody was like, 'You know, you're shooting extra free throws.' Well, we shoot a ton. You know, we shoot a lot. You know, we try to put them in different kinds of pressure situations in practice to make them think about it."*

*"Sometimes, you try not to over-emphasize things and think about it too much and then we try to work on it in the offseason if we have a guy who is struggling, just to, you know, get it straightened out. Sometimes, we make a slight change."*

*"You know, I have one of my assistants, Coach [Kirk] Speraw, who is particularly effective as a shooting instructor, whether it's with a jump shot, whether it's shooting off the move, whether it's free throws, you know, breaking down a*

*guy's shot. You know, we've got all kinds of ability to film it and to slow it down and really show it to them so they can become students of it and I think that has really helped as well."*

**On the importance of depth given how Iowa plays:**

*"Well, it's absolutely critical from a couple of different standpoints. I mean, I think the first thing you look at, like you said, is we look at the fact that we're trying to push the pace and if you play someone like Indiana, who is also going to push the pace, then you've got to have some depth.*

*"But the other side of it is it takes great stamina and depth to guard. I mean, the teams in this league are so talented offensively that if you exert all your effort running the fast break, you can't stop anybody, and to be honest with you, that's kind of what happened to us two years ago.*

*"I mean, we ran the break really well. Matt Gatens was on fire. You know, I had guys playing really well offensively, scoring a lot of points. But when it got down to it, we weren't deep enough to stop anybody. We just were giving up too many points and teams were shooting too high of percentages against us, so I think that has been really helpful to our team that we have this kind of depth.*

*"But we also have experience and guys that have been through it. Guys that don't ... they don't panic. If they're struggling, they have the ability to turn it around and I think that has been important as well."*