

3/3/2014: 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:

"It was a busy week for us. Had two road games and a home game. Uh, you know, we lost to a really good Minnesota team and a really good Indiana team and came home and played a team in Purdue that had played extremely well against Michigan. They played us really tough as they always do and we were thrilled to get a victory yesterday. Need a little bit of rest today and then we'll get ready for Michigan State on Thursday."

On how big the final nine minutes of Sunday's win over Purdue are in relation to the remainder of the season:

"You know, it was an interesting week due to some extenuating circumstances. You know, we had a tough loss against Wisconsin. Both teams played well. They played a little bit better. So we go on the road and it seemed like we were on the road for a long time. Minnesota played great. We still scored 89. Indiana played great. You know, we still scored 86. So we were scoring the ball. We were not defending."

"You know, we looked a little bit tired I thought at times. You know, that was disappointing. I thought we played against two teams that week who were highly energized and really came after us and you know, you have to be respectful of how they

approached those two games.

"We knew Purdue would play the same way. They had Michigan beat, lost in as gut-wrenching a loss as you're going to have. [Glenn Robinson III] makes a great play. But you know they're going to defend. We score 50 in the first half and you're thinking, 'Everything looks great,' and again, it was not just what you said, which was true. The offense was sputtering. The defense wasn't solid either at that stretch and that was disappointing. If you're at least playing good defense, you can spot that offense. But if you're not scoring and you're not defending, then you blow a 13-point lead and get down by four.

"So I guess ultimately, to be able to regroup and compete and outscore them by 11 and get a much-needed win – our 20th win, our ninth league win, all of those things – you know, I think it was very important."

On the toughness inside the program since Iowa's last trip to Michigan State two seasons ago:

"Substantially better in a lot of ways. You know, we're a much deeper team, we're a much more physical team, we're bigger. We're also more experienced. You know, we have guys that have been through it and have the guys that understand runs and understand difficult road atmospheres, which you face regularly.

"You know, when you're a young player, you can get sideways with that and it was a combination of things that day. We weren't as deep, we weren't as big and strong, we got caught up in the crowd, we missed some shots early and got down on ourselves. But the reality is you've got to go through that sometimes and as painful as it is, it's part of the learning process. For us, that was very definitely the case."

On how special his senior class of Melsahn Basabe, Devyn Marble and Zach McCabe is to him:

"Well, each one is different. You know, Basabe is obviously unique in that I've known him the longest. You know, my relationship with him is incredibly unique. I'll always be thankful for the fact that he wanted to come to Iowa to play for me. You know, that means a lot to any coach and the fact that he was as successful as he was because when he was first being recruited, the label on him was he was not a BCS player. He was a mid-major to high mid-major player and when you're in the top 10 in rebounding at Iowa and finish with over 1,000 points, obviously he's a BCS player. So I'm just thrilled for his development and for the relationship that we have.

"You know, the other guys – Zach and Dev – you know, they came here when it wasn't fashionable. You know, Dev's situation is a little bit different because his father is the all-time leading scorer. He grew up following Iowa. You know, we had to re-recruit him twice and you know, I had come to really respect him and enjoy coaching him. He is really as enjoyable a player as I've ever had in terms of he does everything you ask him to do and more and leads and competes and plays hard. He's always where he's supposed to be. I mean, he's just an easy guy to coach and then to be able to put the numbers up that he's putting up with that tremendous attitude has been phenomenal.

"You know, Zach, he just wanted to be a Hawk. He wanted to come here. He's an Iowa kid. He has been phenomenally consistent. You know, like we've said, 900 points, 500 rebounds. Started, didn't start. Played seven minutes, plays 37 minutes. Whatever you ask him to do, he just gives you everything he has got. All of these guys are going to graduate on time with their class. Never had any issues at all off the floor with them.

"I also, you know, have great respect for Darius Stokes, who came in with that group. We needed guys that could come in and help us right away. We needed guys that could come in and help us in practice. He was 180 pounds and 6-7. He worked on his

body and we gave him a scholarship. He's not 6-7, 215 and you know, as good a person that you're ever going to find. So those four guys, for me, will always be a group that I look at in a completely different way than some of those other classes.

"I mean, I've had situations similar. I remember ... you know, it's often times the first year you go to a place and you know, who stays with you and who bails and I get it. I mean, it's a different world and, you know, guys will take off. The ones who stay and the ones who commit to you when they don't really know you yet and they give you a chance, I think you'll always appreciate that."

On preparing for a John Beilein-coached team and what makes it difficult:

"Well, the thing that is always impressive is regardless of who his players are, they always share the ball. There is never any selfishness on any of John Beilein's teams. That said, there's always a respect that there are some guys that are going to be in a position to have the ball a little bit more and take more shots. He sets them up and they play for him.

"They run really good offense and the reads that those guys make really challenge us as coaches to challenge our players defensively to work and to think and to really stay after it and not relax for one second. So I think ultimately when you look at his teams, they're going to be phenomenally well-prepared. They execute in a way that's going to challenge your defense and they're going to share the ball. So every time down, they don't turn it over, they take good shots. The epitome of a team that you have to beat.

"You know, they're not going to mistake their way into a cheap win for anybody. I mean, you've got to beat them and you've got to play your best basketball. We probably played our best

game of the year against them this year. I don't think we could play any better than we played that day."