

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Iowa Hawkeyes
Fran McCaffery
Kris Murray
Filip Rebraca
Tony Perkins

Postgame Press Conference

Ohio State - 73, Iowa - 69

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Iowa Hawkeyes head coach Fran McCaffery, Filip Rebraca, Kris Murray, and Tony Perkins.

Q. I'll start with Kris. Did you guys feel like you had trouble getting going today? How would you explain kind of a little bit of a slow start?

KRIS MURRAY: I feel like we got open looks we wanted to get. They just weren't falling. We were able to get stops too, so it was a close game going into halftime, I think.

Just making shots is the biggest thing, honestly, in the beginning. But both sides of the ball, I feel like we did pretty well.

Q. Tony, you really seemed to flip the switch in the second half playing with a lot of aggressiveness on both sides. How would you describe the change between the first half and the second half, and what was working well for you?

TONY PERKINS: I didn't want to lose the game. So I tried to do the best I can, bring the most energy I can. I had my teammates bring the best energy that they could for these last 20 minutes. That was pretty much it.

I just told them lock in. We've got 20 minutes left. We're down by one at halftime. Let's get to it, bro.

Q. Kris and Tony, that wild scramble at the end, what happened there, in your opinion?



KRIS MURRAY: Just two teams going for the ball. Tough game. I mean, I'm not sure about the call at the end, but it just didn't go our way, I guess, and they got the ball back.

I couldn't tell you exactly what happened. There was a lot of chaos going on.

TONY PERKINS: We just tried to deny the ball, get steals, get a quick basket and tie the game. We could have tied it up, tied the ball up or get a jump ball or try to call timeout if we could get a full grip, but we couldn't get a full grip on the ball.

Q. For any of you guys, you've seen Ohio State sort of at their best and their worst this season. What was it like preparing for them knowing their potential but also the fact they really struggled this year? What was it like preparing for them?

KRIS MURRAY: They're a really talented team. We've kind of seen that all year. They've been in close games. They got a lot of talent, a lot of scoring. Guys could take over at any point in the game.

They're a really good team. When they put it together, tough to beat, as you kind of saw these last couple games for them. As I said, they're tough to beat when they're hot and when they're playing together.

Q. Filip, it seemed like one of those games where you just couldn't get the momentum. You'd get up by three or four points but could never really stretch it out. Describe that on the floor when you just can't stretch it out and the other team just keeps coming and coming.

FILIP REBRACA: We know they're a team that's not going to give up, so credit to them. When I felt that we made a run, they were able to make runs of their own and get stops.

Yeah, they're not going to quit. So that's what they showed.

Q. Filip, what was this week like in preparation? Did



you feel like you guys had a good mojo coming in here like you did last year? And just as a followup, you get more rest this year is a plus, I suppose, but how do you look forward now to the NCAA Tournament?

FILIP REBRACA: Yeah, I felt like we did well preparing. I feel like we executed -- I mean, during practice, what the coaches wanted, I feel like maybe we didn't do everything in the game that they wanted tonight.

Then, yeah, I guess it's a plus that we're going to get more rest this year, but we never want that. We want to be playing for a championship on Sunday. Yeah, it just didn't go our way.

Q. Tony, how about you? Just what are you looking for going forward? Obviously you had the first round loss in the NCAAs last year with the Big Ten title. Is it time to reverse the script in a way?

TONY PERKINS: Yeah, that's the plan. We lost today, but the next game we get a chance to play, we're most definitely going to turn it up a notch and make sure we win, make sure we make up for today.

Q. Coach, shot a good percentage in the first half, but turnovers kind of prevented the team from gathering any momentum. What were you seeing from your vantage point of offensive execution in the half-court?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I thought we played really hard. I thought we executed fairly well. We got good shot opportunities, got to the free-throw line in the second half.

I think in a game like this 11 turnovers is too many. We had a lot of guys fumbling the ball, and we needed to come up with that one at the end.

Q. Fran, the pace of the game, especially in the first half, was that a big factor? Do you think that a lot of it was the turnovers? Because it seemed like they kind of slowed you down more than you guys like to play?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We were trying to push it. They run sets. They're not going to go unless there's an opportunity. I mean, that's just how they play. We shot 50 percent from two; didn't make many threes. Didn't make many threes in the game.

I thought we took good ones. I wasn't like saying, hey, that was a bad shot. I want the guys to shoot threes. They just didn't go.

Q. I know the loss is still fresh, but what was the message to your guys in the locker room, and how do

you kind of prepare them mentally to reset knowing that next up is the NCAA?

FRAN McCAFFERY: The interesting thing there is they already feel bad enough. So I'm not going to go in there and go around the room and talk about what you didn't do and what you didn't do and what you didn't do.

I did say I thought we should have jumped on the ball at the end and called timeout when the arrow is our way. That's what Tony alluded to. I think we thought we had it, and we fumbled it again.

Give them credit. They fought. That was really positive. I sort of reflect more on the body of work than what happened in the last 40 minutes. But like I said, I thought we fought hard. We got to the free-throw line. We got some stops. We didn't get enough probably consecutively, and when that happens, you can blame everybody if you want to, but I have too much respect for Chris and the players that they have, and I think you have to give them credit. They came back and kept scoring.

They didn't panic. I didn't think we panicked. It came right down to the end.

Q. Fran, when you're preparing for Ohio State, Roddy Gayle hadn't done a whole lot for them offensively recently. He had nine points in the last six minutes. Where does he fit on a scouting report?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's prominent. He started yesterday. He's a starter, so he's at the top of the list. He's a really good player. He's not a guy that hunts threes, but he obviously made a huge one today. He's really good off the bounce, and he proved that.

Q. I don't even know how to describe it, but kind of an unfortunate first half for Payton Sandfort. I guess, when you get two touch fouls like that and you only play four minutes, is there any consideration of maybe bringing him back early and just maybe walk through how little of a factor he ended up being? Not by his own doing.

FRAN McCAFFERY: I really felt like he was really frustrated. I think you saw that. I think everybody saw that. That was unfortunate for him.

I think you always think about it, but I felt like Patrick was playing well. We had pretty decent defensive effort going on, and we kind of had our defensive guys out there a little bit more, and I wanted to be able to play loose and try to get going in the second half. It just didn't happen.

Maybe it's how they were guarding him, but it just didn't happen for him.

Q. New opponent next week, at least a week, maybe eight days between games.

FRAN McCAFFERY: At this time of year, as you well know, a couple guys have a little nagging here and there injury, a little banged up. So you get your heavy-minutes guys some rest, and then we'll go back to work, work on our stuff, and then find out who we're playing.

Q. Similar to what he was saying, how long does this type of thing sit with you? You talked about not jumping on them right away after the game, but when do you say something like that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We're just going to move on to the next game. I mean, that's the plan. Wait to see who we're going to play and get ready for that. We take a very business-like approach.

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