

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Iowa Hawkeyes

Fran McCaffery

Brock Harding

Payton Sandfort

Postgame Press Conference



guys.

Q. I thought you got a great effort in the paint tonight against an Ohio State team with some bigs in there. Talk a little bit about how your team's tenacity helped to narrow that margin.

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's interesting, I thought Ladji was spectacular, and Even was really good. We didn't play him as much in the second half. We had considered going with two bigs for that reason that you're talking about. We did put them in for a few minutes together, which we hadn't done in a while. Kind of one goes in and one goes out.

The thing we were concerned about is offensive rebounding. You can look at the stats, they had 13 offensive rebounds for the game. We didn't really get hurt too badly in the first half. The second half we did.

Seydou in particular I thought was terrific in the second half rebounding the ball, got five rebounds, and Ladji, like I said, was spectacular. He looked like he might have been tired, but I just felt like we had to leave him in there.

Q. Kind of a rough start for your team with the turnovers, not scoring any points for the first three or four minutes. What was key to that turnaround?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They were 1 for 10.

Q. On another subject, your bench solid tonight. Big time, a lot of scoring. Besides the scoring, there was a lot of plays and good cuts and back screens. You got a big help from your bench tonight. Talk about those guys and moving forward into the next game.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, as you know, and that's why you're asking the question, you can't survive a tournament, whether it's three, four, five games, unless you have a bench. It makes it almost impossible.

We had 34 bench points on Sunday when we beat Nebraska on the road. You're right, the bench was impactful in so many different ways. They made some baskets, but they rebounded, they defended, they showed

Iowa - 77, Ohio State - 70

THE MODERATOR: We've been joined by Iowa. Coach, we'll ask you to make an opening statement, and then we'll go to questions for student-athletes.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Just really proud of the guys, played really hard. Probably as good a defense as we've played all year long. Couldn't be more proud.

Q. Brock Harding, I know you had that turnover at the end of the game, made it up with that 3. Kind of what was going through your mind after that turnover and to have that comeback like that?

BROCK HARDING: I was really hoping that Josh was going to hit the stepback middle, and he kicked it to me. I knew I had to make up for the turnover somehow, and it found me and it went in.

Q. Mostly directed to Payton. Brock, you were here last year as well, but the past two seasons also playing Ohio State in the first round and losing to them. I believe, Payton, that's the first time also getting the best of Ohio State. Talk to me about the emotions of that going into this game and keeping your season alive.

PAYTON SANDFORT: One of my favorite groups of seniors with Filip Rebraca, Connor McCaffery and Kris Murray. They kind of put a big dent in that season. We were having a great year. Last year we were right on the bubble, and they beat us.

It feels good to knock their season out and we get to keep playing this time. It feels really good and this was for those

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

versatility, they executed our offense when we needed them to. Just couldn't be more proud of those guys.

Q. As Matt was kind of saying there, a slower start but turning things around in the first half. What's the message to the team at halftime as the tie game to keep that momentum and energy in the second half?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We pointed out, like any other halftime, the good things we did, the things we need to be better at, the things we think we can change that might be effective, the things that we think they might change to go against us. That's what halftime is. It's a lot of decision-making and suggestions and affirmation of what did go well.

This is an intelligent group. They're really good at absorbing that information.

Q. On a personal note, since you're here in Indy, what is it like to see Connor get into coaching. Has that led to any fun conversations over the years between you two?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I felt like he was going in that direction. We prepared him to have options, as most parents do. He was academic All Big Ten five times. He was a finance major, double major political science. I wanted him to have the option to do it if he wanted to do it. I would help him in any way I could.

Fortunate enough to get hired by the Pacers, and what a phenomenal opportunity that was for him to learn from Rick and Jim Boylan and Lloyd Pierce and just be around that staff and learn from Chad Buchanan. Just a really classy organization with great culture.

That's what we have here, so that's what he's used to. Then to go to Butler to work for Thad, and with that staff more great culture, just a great place.

I'm thrilled for him. He's loving it. He's learning a lot, and he's grinding like you have to, especially early in your career.

Q. Coach, you talked about Brock Harding's growth this season. What does it say for him to be able to turn that turnover into pretty much a game-winning 3?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You think about him, he came in, and he was Mr. Basketball in the state of Illinois. That's pretty impressive, and he was really good for us last year. But he was a freshman, learning, playing behind a senior.

So he comes back in the summer determined to earn a

starting position, and he did. Then as the season went on, we ended up sliding Drew into that starting position and taking him out. That's the definition of character. He just kept going. So impressive with how he competes and how he impacts the game when you put him in.

A lot of times he finds himself on the floor at the end of the game. He's tough. He's smart. He has that ability to come back after a turnover -- because he had a couple before that. When that shot left his hands, I think we all knew it was good.

Q. After today's win, do you still feel comfortable going into the game with Illinois with the same style, or do you think some things will have to be adjusted in tomorrow's contest?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Every game is different. That's an incredibly talented team. They're really big. So going back to your question, we're going to have to really shore up that tomorrow, whether that means we have to play more bigs or just, I think, stay out of foul trouble if we can because they not only have those guys, but they've got drivers and shooters. It's really one of the more talented teams throughout the course of the year. They've been one of the most impressive teams that I've watched.

I know they had a little bout with the flu bug, and they took a step back. But they just kept coming, and we'll have them ready.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

