

# University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

## Coach Fran McCaffery

### Men's Basketball Press Conference



**Q. As you watched Carolina play in the Maui event, what jumped out about them to you?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: A lot of things. Very impressed with their personnel. Anytime you play against a Roy Williams-coached team, they're going to play hard. They're going to defend. They're going to rebound. They're going to compete. They share the ball. They have a lot of size, and they have athletic guys on the wing and in the guard positions, and they're always going to be a team that challenges your team in every possible way.

**Q. You mentioned the other day that you're kind of stepping up in class. How do you deal with that in practice? You're dealing with much more size, much more quickness than in these first three games.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's not anything that they don't know. They know who North Carolina is. They know the difference. The challenge is typically to get our guys to know and understand how to compete the same way every game and not to say, okay, we have Western Illinois today but we're really looking forward to the Carolina game. No, you want to play Western Illinois, you want to play Carolina, you want to play Iowa State the same way. We all know that there's challenges to that, especially when it's Carolina. It's one of the gold standard programs in college basketball for a very long time.

They were able to watch the same games that you watched, the same games that I watched. They watched those Maui Invitational games, so they saw who played well and they saw some of the new guys and so forth. They know the challenges that are in front of them.

**Q. With that kind of size that they have and athletic ability, both on the floor and to start the game and then off the bench, what kind of plan do you have or do you think you're going to have for Jack, Patrick, just to kind of match up that kind of size?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I think it's an important game for Jack because they're going to have two 6'10", 6'11"

guys on the floor most of the time. I think Patrick and Keegan -- Connor will be fine, and we can move him around, and basically our top nine or our top ten, nothing will change there.

But I think getting Jack Nunge back and watching him assimilate into everything that we're doing so easily based on the incredibly difficult circumstances he faced has really been impressive and heartwarming in a lot of ways. If you just focus on the basketball side of it, he's a difference maker for us against anybody, but especially when you're playing a team that has that many bigs.

**Q. When people look at North Carolina, they've talked a lot about their front court heading into the season, but Caleb Love is probably one of the best shot creators in that 2020 class. Can you give us a scouting breakdown of what you've seen about Caleb?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's a terrific player. Their guard corps is a talented group. He's a freshman that doesn't really play like a freshman. He's not afraid at crunch time to make plays for himself, for other people. He's always been that kind of player. He can play fast. He can play in the half court. He's got size. I think he has a really good demeanor to play this game. He's a competitor.

He's a guy that obviously has our attention and anybody that's going to be on their schedule's attention.

**Q. Through the first three games, what have you liked defensively that your team has done, and what have you maybe not liked and need to get a little better?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think there's a lot of things that we look at and say we could have been better at. We let Western Illinois go on a run. Credit to them and their coaching staff and their players. We got a little complacent there, I think, trading baskets and then we missed a couple and they hit a couple. I think you want to be a little bit more consistent there.

But I thought our ability to guard at the half court and to get our defense back, which is obviously going to be critical anytime you play North Carolina, our rebounding needs to be better than it was, and obviously we're playing arguably the best rebounding team there is, so that's something we have to improve on.



I think anytime you win three games by the totals that we did, you can't just say, okay, well, we took care of business. How do we get better? And what did we do that was really good? We had a game plan going in; what did we like, what didn't we like, knowing that we've got a tough stretch coming up here, three games this week.

You go back, you look at the film, you show it to the guys. We've got a mature group that understands that and wants to get better.

**Q. Staying on that topic, how do you think you are better equipped on the perimeter to defend this year than maybe in years past?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's nothing more than you've got veteran guys that understand scouting reports. They understand who's got the ball, being in the gaps, how to play ball screens, how to play in transition when there's more space, how to change into other defenses effectively. I think that really is what it comes down to.

**Q. Garrison Brooks is a little bit iffy, hurt his ankle in Maui and kind of struggled to get back to practice. If he plays and plays a lot, how does he impact the game, and are you just scouting him and using that scout basically that he is going to play?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, we would expect him to play. If he doesn't play, they have a lot of ways they can go, obviously. But he's been impressive. He was impressive last year. He's been impressive so far this year. He really stays after it on the glass. He's got a really good low-post game offensively, got great length. He's a rim protector, active. But he's also a veteran guy. He doesn't rattle. He just kind of keeps coming, and that's why he's the Preseason Player of the Year in that league.

**Q. Looking ahead, have you had any contact with Gonzaga about their issues there? Is there any reason to think that game might be in jeopardy at this point?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, I'm just thinking about North Carolina.

**Q. This is probably one of Roy's youngest teams that he's had since he's been back in Chapel Hill. I was wondering from what you've seen, in what ways has that youth translated on the court in terms of maybe not what a typical Roy Williams team would do, you're seeing kind of little differences in how much he can give them of the system?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, to tell you the truth, I

haven't noticed a lot in terms of, okay, they're different than when Phil Ford was bringing it down as a senior. Obviously he was the National Player of the Year, but you have really talented guards. They're both freshmen to start. But when I watch the film, they're running their stuff, they're executing I think what the coaching staff wants. Maybe there's an extra mistake or two, but I don't view it as being tentative by those guys. They've been aggressive, they've been confident, and they've played well. They recognize they've got some talented guys in the front court. So there's a number of ways they can go. They're going to crank it up defensively when they have to and try to create some offense with their defense. They've always done that.

**Q. We all knew about Luka coming into the season, Preseason Player of the Year, but his numbers might even be better than people expected. Has he surprised you at all with his play so far for three games?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: He has not, but again, the three teams that we played, while they're all teams starting with North Carolina Central I think is a team that probably expects to win their league. Southern expects to contend. Western Illinois is a brand new program in terms of they flipped the whole roster and have a new coaching staff. But they didn't have the size that Carolina has or the teams coming up on our schedule have.

So Luka did exactly what you would expect him to do. That said, he can really shoot the ball outside. He's done that. I think you're seeing a little more in his repertoire, whether it be the low post, the mid post, top of the key, in the corner. He's a guy that is equally effective pretty much wherever he is on the floor. Our guys know and understand how to utilize him and how to get him the ball and then how to take care of themselves when they have to go score.

**Q. Is there an interest on your part just to see how your pieces all kind of flow together? As you mentioned, you played three good opponents before, but this is a higher tier and how they perform against this will give you kind of a precursor to the Big Ten because you are throwing so many guys in? Do you think this is a good chance to just kind of see how these pieces fit together at different junctures of the game?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think that's true. If you go back to when the ACC-Big Ten challenge began, I think that was kind of what everybody was thinking. Early in the season, let's play the best teams, not wait until after Christmas. So now even if it was a normal year, we'd be playing Carolina. We might be playing a Gavitt game, obviously Iowa State,

and then we play typically two December games in conference. So things have changed.

I think that's for the better. Putting high-profile games early in the season to accentuate college basketball on television is really important. But to go back to the original part of your question, yes, it does early in the season give you an opportunity to see what we have, what we can count on, what combinations of players work together. That's why I think those first three games were important.

We had a unique lineup on the floor in the last game with some young guys and CJ that really took that thing from 16 back to 30, so that was great, and I think we're all kind of doing the same thing this time of year.

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