

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. In the next few games what would you like to see your team get done?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Just want to keep getting better. We're being more consistent in all areas. A lot of guys feeling comfortable out there. We've been fortunate to get contributions from a lot of people, and I think we need to have that continue. The only way you can do that is to play games and get them some playing time.

Q. You've made some substitutions based on defense more than offense; is that fair?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't think so. We go to our bench, we expect production, and we've gotten it, and I'm really pleased with that group. I will say that there are times in games when, okay, you need to maybe change things defensively. We were scrambling, like at Purdue, for example, with the press, so that was a lineup that was particularly good in that area.

But we feel like most of the time the guys that we put in can dribble, pass and shoot and defend and execute our stuff and do it, like I said, on a consistent basis. That's always a challenge.

Anybody can do it at any given time, but can you consistently do it against the caliber of competition that we're playing, and that's always a challenge.

Q. How much can a game like Saturday night help Kris Murray with his play?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's been pretty consistent. He was banged up, too, so he wasn't himself a little bit, but he felt good Saturday. When he's feeling good, he impacts the game with offense, with defense, with rebounding, and he's just getting more and more comfortable with what we're doing, and obviously that plays into your confidence level, so he's playing with confidence now.

Q. Patrick seems a lot more comfortable as a distributor now. There was a stretch where he was

feeding Keegan --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, they have good chemistry together, and it's great to see Patrick in the open floor making plays for other people. You're right, in high school he was pretty much taking it coast to coast to score it, and that's okay, too, to do sometimes, but he knows he's got a lot of other talented players around him, and that's his job. When you're playing the small forward position, you've got to be able to make plays for yourself and for other people equally important.

Q. What's the biggest stride he's taken?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he's stronger, but he was really not himself, either. That thing lingered on him, so he was still productive, but he wasn't 100 percent. That plays into your confidence level and your ability to do certain things that you want to do, so that's the best he's felt in a while. When he feels like that, he's typically capable of doing a lot more things, especially on the glass. He got six defensive rebounds the other night. That was important, because if we're going to address the rebounding issue that had been a problem, it's collective. It's not -- like I've said all the time, it's not your 4 and your 5, it's everybody, guards and your small forwards, so he did a good job there.

Q. Did you see that the other night in the way that you were able to rebound?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. They're a really good offensive rebounding team because they're five out, so they're running rebounders. They come in from all over the place. You're not blocking out near the painted area. You've got to go get them essentially. When they're shooting as many threes as they shoot, they're bouncing all over the place, so you've got to be able to go get those, as well.

Q. The COVID thing obviously is playing havoc with every league. A couple Big Ten teams are on pause. How much of a -- you had mentioned before that you've got 100 percent. Was that an easy sell to the players? Did you have to sell it at all?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I didn't have to sell it at all. They were all in, yeah. Nobody questioned it. Luckily we're in a position to be able to provide it, but in a way relatively

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early, so they got vaccinated relatively early, and they got boosted at the appropriate time.

We haven't had any real issues with regard to guys feeling sick. We had a couple situations where guys felt not so great for a couple hours and they were fine. But the guys are all in.

Think about it. If you think about the freshman class last year when they came in how unique it was for them. They get to campus, there's nobody here. We were practicing, then we played the whole season without any fans until the Big Ten Tournament, so they were kind of -- they didn't have a typical freshman year. They didn't go to any football games. Nobody was really going out downtown. They did a little bit.

So it was kind of a strange situation, but something we addressed. Not something we harp on, just be diligent, be intelligent with where you go, who you're seeing. But I think the vaccination status of our guys has really been helpful.

Last year I think our university's commitment to daily testing was critical. Gave everybody confidence. You can daily test, but where are you going? Who are you hanging out with?

Guys made good decisions I thought last year, and they're still doing it. This go-around apparently is a little bit more aggressive, but obviously our confidence level is high because everybody has been double vaccinated, been boosted, and we're trying to be intelligent with how we live our lives and stay committed to one another.

Not to say that it couldn't happen, because it certainly could, but I think we've done everything we can to increase the chances that it's not going to happen.

Q. The traveling that you did, has it stayed pretty much the same in terms of limited -- you're together but you're apart from --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, you know, we've got some guys that might be going home, that are going to be going home for Christmas, so that's something that you hope that they make good decisions when they go home and who you're gathering with. It's not like you're going to ask for a vaccination card from everybody you come in contact with, but we're pretty self-contained when we travel. We charter and we stay in a hotel, we stay together. We don't go a lot of places.

The other night we played in -- you were there. We were right on top of each other and so forth. We've had some

guys, probably had five or six guys get the flu, but luckily nobody has gotten COVID yet.

Q. Do you think what's happened with some of these teams that are on pause is a wake-up call to your guys to say, hey, we've still got to be careful even with the vaccinations?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think so, yes. I think that's a good point. Those guys are constantly looking at their phones, and if you look at the scores and there's 25 games and 13 are postponed or eight are postponed, canceled -- now, the other thing you're seeing this year which is different than last year is you're seeing forfeits. Nobody wants to forfeit. That's an L. Another reason why you want your guys to be really smart with what they do, where they go.

Q. Do you have to be more careful with Patrick?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I would say anybody with any preexisting condition is of a concern. It's hard to treat him any differently. We're aware, and Brad is aware, Dr. Marcussen, they're aware. He does see probably more doctors in the course of a month than other people do, which is a good thing.

I think you'd be more concerned with those that have any type of lung issue like asthma or anything like that.

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