

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. What do you see when you look at this Michigan State team?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They have a lot of similarities to all of Tom's teams. They compete. They defend. They're physical. They're deep. They move the ball. They push the ball. A lot of things that they've consistently done well for a very long period of time.

Q. What did you enjoy most about coaching Luka, and what were some experiences that you had with Roy Marble over the years?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, obviously with Luka, I have a very special relationship with him. Saw him early and really got close with he and his family. As special a relationship as I've had in this profession on so many different levels, and it's always particularly rewarding when you watch someone work as hard as he has and develop into the player that he became, which is the best player in the country. That's really hard to do.

But the other thing is as great a player as he is, he's even a better person. I'm proud that my son Connor and he are best of friends along with Patrick, and they'll be best friends for life, and that's what it's all about.

As far as Roy, Devyn is one of my favorite players I've ever coached. Very close with him. He was in my first technically recruiting class. I didn't sign him but I had to re-recruit him a couple times. He was a star pretty much from midway point of his freshman year on.

But Roy was one of the first people I reached out to when I got to town. He was a good friend of mine and a big-time supporter of me when I got here. We remained very close right up until the time he passed.

He was great with Devyn, he was great with my boys who were younger at the time. He was a basketball person. He was everywhere in the community when it came to basketball, and he would pull my guys aside, Connor and Patrick, and talk to them about the game and things like

that.

I always appreciated that about him. He had a great way about him, and he deserves to be up there in the rafters.

Q. To what do you attribute the team's turnaround in February?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We just kept plugging. This league is brutal. Lost some close games. You have to be able to come back and win some close games. Just kept staying positive with everybody. I like the fact that we get really good play from a lot of different people, and that's great to see as a coach. It's important.

I thought the Ohio State game was a really good example of that. Those kids really competed, and everybody I put in made an impact on the game. That's the kind of team we have to have. That's the kind of team you have to have to win in this league, and we'll keep trying to do that.

Q. The people you had covering Liddell got, I think, plenty of credit for their defense, but your cadre of guards all seemed to have important roles in that game. Can you discuss how they played?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, everybody I went to came off the bench and contributed in a big way, whether it be defensive intensity, getting down on the break, moving the ball, scoring the ball. They all got key buckets in key situations.

A lot of the defense that was employed to stop E.J., a lot of times it was guards doubling down, making him play in a crowd, it wasn't just the guy who was guarding him, and that takes great awareness and intensity and concentration, and those guys have shown to be really mature and understanding the game plan and carrying it out.

Q. You've talked a lot about the businesslike approach of this team. The other night when somebody brought up about the emotions of the game, you weren't worried about it. From a coaching standpoint what is that like, that that's something you don't have to be concerned about?

FRAN McCAFFERY: When you really look at it, this is a



long season. I say this all the time, but we started working out in June, and here we're still at it, and the games start coming quick now. You can't overreact to any one thing that happens. You have to stay the course.

You have to be consistent with how you prepare, how you work, and I'm always going to be positive with them and develop confidence and move on to the next. It could be a big win, it could be a tough loss. Just move on to the next and try to get better. Break the game down, look at it, study it collectively, individually, and then effect change if change needs to be made. Those guys have been really professional this year. It's been a fun group to coach that way.

Q. Do you have any thoughts or comments on what went on in Madison yesterday?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, to be honest with you, I didn't watch the game. Kirk and I were really getting after it with Michigan State. This has been a pretty quick turnaround -- we got home late after the game, and now turnaround and try to get ready for the next one.

You know, I really haven't given it a lot of thought. I've said publicly before, the handshake line is not something I'm in favor of. Not that I'm not in favor of sportsmanship. Clearly I am. But I think it's a recipe for a problem and happens all the time.

Q. Do you think it should be eliminated or should it be case by case?

FRAN McCAFFERY: What I don't think people realize, there's a lot of conversation that goes on between the coaches and the players before and after the game. If you want to give somebody a hug, you can. If you want to spend time with somebody, you can. It doesn't have to be forced, and it doesn't have to be right at that moment.

A lot of things happen throughout the course of games. A lot of intensity, a lot of stuff said. So you might have an issue, and there has been some. I think you just move on.

Q. Is that the biggest problem, that things are way too fresh?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, it just takes one person to say something, and everybody is right on top of each other. You all know how intense we are, the pressures on the players, the coaches. A lot of stuff is said. A lot of stuff was said to our team at Ohio State. Not by them, by the fans. You deal with it.

I have pulled my team off the floor before. You all have

seen that. And I have been commended by my administration at two different places for doing that. My main concern is the health and welfare of our guys.

Q. Did you guys have to deal with that, your players, like at Ohio State, with some of the things that are said from the fans? I know it's part of the game, but I think people do go over the line.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, that's a long conversation probably. It's the way fans are, especially if they're sitting close. A lot of places they're sitting right there on top of you. We just ignore it. We're used to that on the road. Everybody is in the same boat there.

I don't think that's going to change, quite frankly.

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