

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. Fran, your thoughts on Keegan getting unanimous first team and Jordan recognized for a fifth time.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I'm thrilled for those guys not only for being recognized, but you know how hard they work, you know the kind of people they are, the character that they have. When you see your players achieve something special, it's the best feeling in the world for a coach.

Q. Most years Keegan would probably be Player of the Year. Kind of wild this year with so many good players.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, you could have gone a lot of ways with that first team. Even the second team is pretty special. So we are happy he was on it.

Q. Kind of leads into this week and what could be kind of a unique tournament.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I think it's not like you go down there and think that any one particular team has a particular edge. Everybody knows, from the two teams that won it and everybody else, anybody can beat anybody.

That's kind of what makes this time of year so exciting across the board. You see it every night. No matter what tournament you're watching this time of year, that's what you see, and I think that's what the people enjoy. Then it continues into the NCAA Tournament. We're excited for the opportunity.

Q. Did you see this coming from Nebraska, what they've suddenly done?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah. I've said that their personnel is good. If you look at their players individually -- and they were so close, Ohio State in overtime and Michigan was right down to the wire. They play well on the road, they finally get one. They played really well against us, and then they kind of put it together.

It takes time when you put a team together with a lot of

new players like Fred had. Sometimes it happens quicker and sometimes it doesn't.

Q. What's Patrick's status going into this week?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: He's going to try to go today a little bit, get up, because he hasn't really run much. He's been sick, and then of course with his hip. At least without playing, maybe it's helped his hip. We'll see how that goes. So we'll see what he can get done today.

Q. When you went back and watched the game, what exactly did you see in that opponent?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I think it was attention to detail. You're playing a team where, if they throw it in, Kofi's going to be a handful at scoring or getting his own rebound back. He's like Moses Malone in that capacity; he goes back and gets his own misses. But then when they shoot the threes, and if they're going in, that's one thing, but if they're missing, they're flying all over the place, you've got to get the long ones. I thought our personnel was pretty locked into that, gave us a chance to go out and get some transition opportunities.

Q. How much is confidence going to play into Tony emerging a little bit here?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I will say this about him. In the times that he did play last year, he kind of played with a little bit of swag, which is what you want. It's not always the case with freshmen, especially when they're behind veteran guys like he was last year.

But you could kind of see it coming. I think he's gotten a lot more minutes because he's been really productive at both ends. I think he's proven that he's a gamer.

He's not afraid of the moment. He's not afraid of the crowd. He just kind of keeps coming, and that's what you appreciate as his teammate or as his coach. So I'm thrilled for him, and I think is he's just going to keep getting better. I think that's safe to say with him.

Q. Did it help you guys this week in your prep that you played both the teams that you could potentially play relatively recently?



FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, except that I think you look at Northwestern, they were not themselves. I mean, I don't want to sell our own team short. It was a great Senior Night. Buie was out. Pete Nance was not himself. He wasn't the only one. Of course they played substantially better the next game when the guys weren't sick.

Then Nebraska, you could kind of see it when we played them. We saw glimpses of what they could be as that came right down to the wire, and then they put it together the next three on the road too. So that tells you a little bit about them. It's a team that wasn't together, but they're all veteran guys. They can put it together and beat anybody, which they just proved.

Q. What element does Tony bring to the lineup?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: He can guard pretty much anybody. If they have a good wing player, we can put him on that person. If we have to switch, he can play at the post. If you start doing the analytics stuff, another guy, along with Tony, that really impacts our defense is Connor when he's out there. But Tony, not only is he physical and quick, he's tough. He fights you. I think what will happen with his defense is he'll get better at recognizing action.

That's where Bohannon is so good. He recognizes a staggered double. Is his screen the screener? Is there a flare screen coming? If I'm on the side with two, which way am I going? Who's the better shooter? Am I bluffing and staying? Those kinds of things come with experience, and you'll see Tony continue to get better at that, as good as he is.

Q. Do you remember anyone in the past that you've coached even as an assistant that has his versatility and experience?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I had a 27-win Siena team that was pretty good in that capacity, but we weren't as deep. We had really good players, but I've pretty much stuck with 10, but I could really go 13 if I needed to with Josh, Riley, and Austin. I feel very confident playing those guys. I've never had a team with that many.

Q. On another note, there's been a lot of conversation on Twitter about the incident with Kris on the court. And they talked about what fans are saying impacts his family. As a coach, what's your advice to players on dealing with that?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Here's the problem. It's not going away. It happened to my son Jack. He's a freshman in high school. He's getting killed on the road. As long as they keep putting people right by the court, they're going to

be yelling. It's not just the students. It's the high rollers. They're typically worse than the students.

There's one of two ways. Either you just deal with it, keep your mouth shut, or you go back at 'em, if you want to. Whatever works for you. We're not solving that problem today or any time in the future. People are going to buy a ticket, and they're going to come and they're going to yell at the players.

But I will tell you this, it's a thousand times worse on social media with what these kids hear and what is said to them and how they are viciously attacked. So I feel bad for Kris, but I can tell you this, he's not worried about it. That's one tough kid there.

Q. You're not a social media guy.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: No. Are you?

Q. I have --

FRAN MCCAFFERY: You've been known to tweet. They make you tweet. (Laughter).

Q. There will be a day when I don't. Your players seem to have free rein. What's your philosophy about that?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: You prepare your guys for life, and you want them to stand up for themselves. You want them to take advantage of the platform. Sometimes, yeah, there might be a Twitter beef. A lot of times they're using their platform in incredibly positive ways. If you muzzle them, you don't get any of the good stuff.

I would say most of what our guys tweet and they put out there is positive. They will defend themselves, and I would expect them to defend themselves. Occasionally a line is crossed. Sometimes coaches don't want to ever get to that point so they don't deal with it at the front end. So don't tweet anything, therefore, we may never get to the point where you cross a line. You know what? That's life. Sometimes you cross a line and you deal with that. You might have to apologize. You might have to get reprimanded or whatever.

But I would always want my guys to stick up for themselves, and you guys know me well enough, I will always stick up for them and have their back.

It is an interesting journey that they go through at this level, and my hope is always that it's the best four years of their lives. I want it to be an incredibly positive experience, but that's not what life is. There's defeat. There's adversity.

And there's things that happen that are not pleasant. So we deal with it, but by all means, you want to fire back, go ahead. I'm not going to ever tell them not to.

Some people handle it -- Kris is typically a quiet kid. Like he's not one of those guys that's out there, he's not going to run his mouth. But I know this, he'll compete, and he'll prepare, and he'll work, and he has character. So we have others that are not afraid to put themselves out there in a big way. We all know who they are.

Q. At the end of the game, and Nicholas Baer tweeted about this. He said you went over and gave Kris a hug at the end of the game. How important was that to you to do that?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I think it's important that you know your players. Kris is such a great teammate, and he wants to win so badly, and he's such a good person. He misses the last shot, that's a difficult thing. I was pleased with, number one, our execution to get him that shot. I was pleased that he took it. I said, look, you're going to make the next one. You're going to get this opportunity again, and you're going to make the next one. I love you.

Because he missed a couple of free throws, so he feels bad. We all know when our guys feel bad about something. That's when he needs you, as you're high fiving him when everything's going great. Because he has had a special year for us, and I think the sky's the limit for where he's headed.

I want him to know how much we appreciate him because we wouldn't have been in position to have a last shot if it wasn't for him. I think sometimes we forget that when it's the end of the game.

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