

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. What was it about Brock Harding that you liked to sign him to come to Iowa?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it was pretty simple. You just had to watch him play. He was really good in every area, no weaknesses. Gets where he wants to go on the floor, makes threes, makes pull-ups, finds people. Wreaks havoc on defense, great feel for how to play, great at the end of the game. He's a winner.

Q. An obvious question, but what will he and Owen Freeman get playing together for a year?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, they'll be together for the first time since Moline High School, but they've been phenomenal together for a couple summers for a very good AAU team. That will continue. They already have compatibility in terms of knowing each other extremely well, and they're going to be a tough team to beat on that state.

Q. What prompted Owen's decision to go to Moline?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think part of it was he wanted to play with Brock. I think there were other factors involved, but I know that was one of the big ones.

Q. You have three top 150 guys, what can you say about the class as a whole?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it started with Owen and Pryce. We started recruiting them early. Obviously with Pryce, we were going after Payton hard and Pryce was a freshman, so that's how long we've been recruiting him and knowing him. He kept getting better and better, and his numbers last year in the state were phenomenal, as they were in the summer on a very high-level AAU circuit.

We went after Owen a long time ago and really zeroed in on him as being a front court guy that could really help us immediately. He got a lot of attention. We went hard at him, and we were very fortunate he committed pretty quickly.

Then Brock is a guy that we've been watching, and it's one of those things that didn't take long, but after a while you just watched this kid play and said, he could play for anybody. I think people were looking at his size and trying to figure out reasons he couldn't play in a Power Five, but all he ever did was outplay everybody that lined up in front of him.

I think after a while it was like, that kid, he helps you win no matter who he plays for.

I'm really excited about all three of these guys.

Q. I don't know how many programs in the country have had as many sets of brothers you have, but what does it do for the brothers and maybe for the team?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think there's familiarity on a number of different levels. Obviously the younger guys already know the guys on the team, and they've watched the program. They've watched the games. There's comfortability there.

I think the fact that the older brothers are telling the younger ones to come, I think that's great. Obviously Keegan and Kris were the same year, but you're happy that the older brothers had a great experience.

Q. What does it say about the chemistry of your team that these guys really gravitate --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, Pryce obviously, he'll come down and want to spend time with his brother. His brother is friends with the guys on the team, so he gets to know them and they become friendly. It makes what can be a very difficult decision a lot easier when you have that comfort factor.

Q. What are some of the main differences between Pryce and Payton at this stage of high school?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, the thing about Pryce, when he was a freshman, he started at the point and played point primarily his freshman and sophomore year. I really liked that about him.

But he kept growing. He's now about almost the same size



as Payton, 6'7", 6'7" plus. But I also think it's been good for Pryce to really expand his game. He plays at the forward position. He has to rebound. Sometimes he's the tallest guy out there and he has to get all the rebounds and block shots, and then he brings it down, but he's always making threes, he's always making plays.

But both of them had very similar skill sets in the sense that they really don't have a lot of weaknesses. They can dribble, pass and shoot, they rebound, they defend. They really know how to play.

They grew up in a big-time basketball family. Their dad and their mom and their grandfather, they've been around the game, and you can see that when you watch them play.

Q. Pryce has that same mindset where every shot he takes he thinks is going in?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. You're surprised when it doesn't go in when he shoots it. I think that's the important thing, that you just keep shooting if you miss a couple.

Q. What are your impressions of North Carolina A&T?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I like their team. They've added some pieces. They're an interesting program that obviously I'm familiar with them because they were in the same city where I coached for a number of years. They're going to be in three conferences in three years. You don't see that very often.

But very proud program. They have talent. They have depth. They've got some size.

I think they've put a team together that has some pieces that can be special. They've got really good guard play, aggressive drivers, scorers, guys that can make shots, make threes, and then their front court guys, again, they have more depth than they've had in the past. They can go big, they can go small. They're going to play at least 10, probably maybe a little bit more even. They're comfortable going deeper with the group they have. It'll be a great challenge for us.

Q. North Carolina A&T shot 34 threes the other night. Is their volume of three-point shooting by design?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, they have a lot of guys that have confidence in their ability to make threes. I would say make shots. Threes, yeah, but they're going one-on-one. They're shooting pull-ups. They play with a great deal of aggressiveness and confidence.

Q. When we talked to Payton after the game on Monday he said said one of the teams goals was to change the perception or narrative about the program and defense. How have you seen them internalize that from the summer and how has it played out so far?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think that we have a group that is committed to playing at both ends. I felt the same way about last year's team. I appreciate Payton taking pride in that. I think he's a really good defender -- people sometimes look at good shooters that way, but if you watch him play, he really competes defensively, and that says a lot about him.

I think we have a team that can really defend. We have length. We have depth, and we can put pressure on the ball. That's what we're supposed to do.

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