

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. You said Sunday that your guys executed a game plan about as well as any they ever have. In reviewing that, any explanation, or what made you say that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I said it because it was true. They were really locked in. There were certain things that we wanted to do that we did successfully, and we've talked about this before. A lot of times the best game plans turn out to be a disaster, and it's not their fault. It's our fault. You put a plan together and it falls apart, you have to make adjustments.

We stayed locked in and executed well against a really good, really well-coached team on the road in a hostile environment. That's what you have to be able to do in this league.

Q. Is it sometimes easier to stay locked in on the road when you're together as a group like that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Sometimes, yeah. I think a lot of times it's a function of how you start on the road.

(Audio interruption.)

Q. I'm not sure if "improved" is the right word, but it's hard to think of another Big Ten player who's lifted his game more than Filip, and that's because he's had to in a lot of ways.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I always say this. It was in there. He had already proven it at the collegiate level. He just didn't prove it in the Big Ten from an offensive standpoint. From a defensive and rebounding standpoint, from an execution and basketball IQ standpoint, he was terrific last year. There's no way we win 26 games without him in the starting lineup.

I think going through the league and having another summer with us, another couple cycles in the weight room, from his confidence and understanding of what this level is standpoint, he has it figured out.

Q. You have a veteran team; they've played together more than a few years. Filip joins last year, gets his feet wet, but he really seems like he's emerged as one of the go-to leaders. How has he earned that respect with this group?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, the only way you earn respect is by how hard you play. Now, at some level you have to be somewhat productive, but you can be a little less productive if you're a worker and you're a character guy every minute of every day, which he is.

But he also has a real good sense when he's communicating at the 5-spot that he's communicating accurate information. We talk about that all the time. Don't be out there running your mouth if you're not 100 percent sure what you're saying and the information you're giving to your teammates is what we want.

He was good last year, but he was probably quieter as he's trying to figure out where he's supposed to go. If you're going to tell everybody elsewhere to go, you'd better know where you're supposed to go.

I've said this a million times, Adam Woodbury was the best ever at that. There was none better. Maybe in the history of basketball. Seeing action before and anticipating what they were doing and knowing the game plan inside and out and effectively communicating to his teammates and the effect that that had on our ability to win. Filip is like that right now, so it's great to see.

Q. How would you assess Filip's passing ability?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Really good. And when you look at his development in terms of confidence offensively in particular, everybody immediately assumes that's scoring, and he has scored, and he's scored really well. But in picking and popping, pick and hit him on a short roll and now have to make a play in traffic, make a quick read, where to go with the ball, he's been spectacular with that.

Sometimes you have big guys, they set a screen, they roll to the front of the rim. That's it. Gets the ball, lay it in or figure out who they're going to screen next.

He's comfortable in the mid-range, in the low post, or out on the perimeter. To put it over the deck, you see him



rebounding the ball and outlets are jammed up, he just brings it, which is what I've been encouraging him to do since he got here, and it's great to see because no matter what, if your coach doesn't have the confidence in you, you're probably not going to have confidence in yourself. I try to instill confidence in him and just tell him to trust his talent and go make plays, and that's what he's doing.

Q. Looking at Michigan, obviously a lot of it starts with Hunter Dickinson, but what is your impression of their front court as a whole and what challenges they present?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They have a really good team. They have depth. There's a lot of different pieces that are fitting.

I think Jett Howard is one of the premier players in our league. I think we've seen that. I think Bufkin is a guy who was pretty good last year, but now I think he's really taken a big step. You have maybe a different point guard than they thought they were going to have at the start of the year, but he doesn't play like a freshman. He has a very aggressive mindset. Williams is good.

They have guys coming off the bench -- Tarris Reed is really good. Then you get a guy like Joey Baker, a transfer from Duke, that's a piece that's really helpful with a team that has some new guys that they're trying to fit. They lost some guys last year that were integral parts of that team, but like you said, it all starts with Dickinson. He's one of the best players in the game right now.

Q. A lot of your colleagues in the Big Ten have been speaking out about officiating issues. Are you guys talking behind the scenes as a group?

FRAN McCAFFERY: No.

Q. Have you talked to anybody with the Big Ten or anything, or have they reached out to you?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, those conversations are ongoing, so you're going to have conversation with our supervisor of officials. That's his responsibility. Terry (Wymer) does a terrific job of that.

That's all day every day across the board, and that's what his responsibility is, and he's really trying to get his arms around the job. This is his first year, and he's one of the best that ever did it when he was blowing the whistle.

But there's a lot at stake, and there's a lot going on. When you're in a league with so many good players and so many of these games are coming down to the wire, there has to be more discussion. There's blowouts, nobody ever talks

about the officiating. But they're not. So somebody is upset about something, and he's the one who hears about it.

But his job is only one thing, and that is to provide quality officials, the best in the business, and make sure they're up to the standard that's been set by the Big Ten, and I think he's done that.

We've got the best officials out there. You can complain if you want to, but you're not going to get anybody that's any better because we're getting the best as it is.

Q. Josh Ogundele and Dasonte played together for two years at Worcester before Dasonte went to Brewster. Did that help with recruiting, or did you see Dasonte when you were recruiting Josh, and how have you seen their relationship grow this year?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, they're good buddies. They've always been good buddies. They both have great personalities. That's a program that I have unbelievable respect for, the coaching staff, the entire institution. Been up there a lot.

We saw Dasonte at a young age because the relationship that he had with Courtney Eldridge. Courtney knew his dad and he took him to see him and he played really well, and then we go up there to see Dasonte and then saw Josh and then others like T.J. Power, who ended up going to Duke, but we were recruiting him as well. Just a quality program. Jamie Sullivan does an unbelievable job.

Q. Blood lines are pretty common in your program; I'm talking about family bloodlines: Your sons, Kris, his dad, et cetera. What has Filip's dad done for Filip with Filip's dad being a lifer in the game?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he grew up in the gym, as you would have expected. We've laughed and talked about what it was like. Very intense for him. All coming from a great place, but very intense workouts as a young player, coming up through the system.

As you know, in Europe, it's a completely different approach. University and sport are separate. Colleges don't have basketball teams. You either play for the professional team or the club, it's called, or you go to school. Of course sometimes people do both, but they're separate.

If you are participating for the club, then there's an expectation, and it's this is serious and we're training and playing, and that's how he was raised. So work ethic is not an issue that you would ever have to discuss with Filip Rebraca. If anything you might tell him to get out of the

gym one day and relax. That's an expectation; it's not something that they bring up.

His dad played in the league for a long time. His dad didn't come over until he was I think it was late 20s, still played six or seven years and has a big job over there now in basketball. I enjoyed getting to know him through the recruiting process. He's trusted us to coach his son, and that's how it's done. We appreciate that. I appreciate Filip every day.

Q. Listening to you describe his work ethic, it's kind of how you've described Luka's work ethic. Do you see a lot of similarities in how they approach it every day?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, and Luka, as you know, he'd go over there in the summer sometimes to visit family, and he'd be training that way when he's over there. Very similar, and just kind of zero maintenance in that respect. You didn't have to remind him, hey, are you getting shots up, are you getting a lift in. They just take care of their business and just keep grinding. It's really a pleasure to coach guys like Filip.

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