

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. These quick turnarounds like this, how much do you have to watch how much you press them in practice? How do you handle that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's pretty routine. You can't be nuts. We got home at 1 a.m., so you're smart with what you do in practice and how hard you go and how long you go and how much you practice versus film review on us and our opponent. You kind of figure it out.

Q. What have you observed from Rutgers since the last time you played them, near the top of the standings?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They were kind of there before. Purdue only has one loss, and it was to them. They're pretty good.

Q. You had four guys who played the entire second half last night, and that's not common. How did that work itself out, and how much maybe do our generalizations, right or wrong, about minutes played with college players?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think in a perfect world, each of those guys would have gotten a little bit of rest at least. As I've said before, and it's part of what your question is, there's four media timeouts, there's other timeouts. They just got a 15-minute rest at halftime.

What you do is you're in a huddle and you're looking at your guys and you're seeing if they're breathing heavy. Nobody was.

But then you also evaluate, okay, what's your defensive intensity look like because that's where it's going to manifest itself, guys getting easy baskets, and I thought our defense was really good. That's the only reason I kept those guys out there. They were connected defensively and I thought did a really good job.

I didn't want to mess with that.

Q. Guys are pretty good at telling you, too, I would imagine telling you, hey, I need a breather --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, if they're exhausted they're going to ask to come out. I say that, but truth is most guys won't ask to come out ever, even if they're exhausted. The other thing is foul trouble is going to dictate taking guys out, and we didn't have any last night other than Payton getting two in the first half.

Q. How surprised are you when you see your team miss 14 of 17 threes? Is that just how the game is?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, it's unfortunate we've had a couple of those. What you do is you look and say, okay, are we taking bad shots, are we getting guys good threes. I don't remember too many bad ones. Connor took a deep one at the end of the shot clock. I thought Kris out of the corner when he kind of popped through, looked like we were going to swing it and kind of threw it back to him, I thought that was going to go in. So did he. A little more concerned that we missed the free throws. We usually don't miss free throws like that.

Q. How much do these quick turnarounds help with not dwelling on these losses?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't think there's a lot of that anyway. Every game in this league is close. You win close, you lose close. You very methodically in a businesslike manner get ready for the next game. You don't get too high and too low.

Q. It was almost a year ago that the team was kind of in a similar spot as they are now, got a big win against Minnesota and kind of sparked a February run. Is that something you can pull on from last season?

FRAN McCAFFERY: To be truthful, I don't think we really look at that. It's a completely different team. I know it sounds cliché, but we're just locking in on Sunday and trying to be the best version of ourselves on Sunday. We'll worry about February when February comes.

Q. We always look at the big picture in the media, but you're just locked in on the next challenge; how difficult is it to get your players to think that way, or are they the same way? Do they not worry about the

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big picture?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think we hope they're the same way. Is everybody locked in like that? Probably not. Somebody is looking down the road or looking at home, road. I would hope not. Half the time, I swear, I don't even know who we're playing next after that. I don't pay any attention to it. I find out from you guys, hey, we've got three in a row at home or we have a bunch of road games coming up. Whatever. I know we play Rutgers at home on Sunday.

Q. Have you always been like that as a coach?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. The guys I worked for were like that, but I think it was really evident when I worked for Coach MacLeod. Think about trying to get ready 82 times. He was as methodical and businesslike as you could ever get, break the film down, plan practice, get ready for your next opponent, play the game. He never not too high or too low, and he grinded the same way every game.

It's a little different in college. There's a little more emotion to it, but I don't get that way.

Q. Can you gauge that in players as you recruit?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you might be able to, but in today's recruiting world, it's different because sometimes you're signing guys strictly on what they do in AAU. You don't even see them play for their high school team. Most of the time we will because we get in early and try to get to know them and we get to know their families. That's the only way you can decide if they fit your culture.

But as recruiting has changed with the transfer portal and 2000 transfers, you're going to maybe think about it. You can't find a better culture guy than Filip Rebraca, but we recruited him for three weeks. But I made sure that we reached out to his family and the people that he was close with here in the States and him. It was a great fit for him on so many different levels. That's what he's trying to figure out, too.

There's a lot of things we're trying to figure out in the recruiting process, and it's important to do that and not just look at numbers because numbers, they work sometimes, but that's where the analytics stuff fails you. It's all about people and what is their makeup. That's kind of how I view it. I don't dismiss analytics, but you have to get to know who's going to be on your team. What kind of person are they going to be in the locker room. What kind of person are they going to be on campus.

Fortunately we've had a pretty good run of really good

people. I'm really proud of that.

Q. Patrick will be a game-time decision?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. He will practice today and tomorrow. I think he's getting closer. But we'll see.

Q. Do you think you would have enjoyed coaching in the NBA?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think you have to be smart enough to understand the difference. It's a different job. I think my approach probably would have worked in terms of I've often been referred to as a player's coach. You'd better be in the pros. They're the show. You are not the show. If you think you're the show, then you'll be unemployed quickly in that league.

You have to manage people way more important than what you're running, what your plays look like, and yet there's still very similar components to the coaching profession.

A lot of times you have guys, I really want to coach in the pros one day. That's a goal. I've never felt that way. I've always looked at myself, I'm a college coach, and that's where I'm happy and that's where I fit.

But I have tremendous respect for a number of guys in that league that I've gotten to know just in conversations over the years, whether it be Jeff Van Gundy or Rick Carlisle. There's so many really, really talented coaches in that league, and what comes at them now is not easy to handle sometimes, the scrutiny, and like we said, 82 games, plus preseason, plus playoffs.

I think you have to -- anything short of a real businesslike approach, but at the same time, you have to connect. I don't anticipate being in that league in my career.

Q. I wasn't suggesting that, but I wondered --

FRAN McCAFFERY: I was going to hire you as my agent.

Q. Then let's rethink that. (Laughter).

What put that question in my mind was your comment about controlling the roster, and you don't get to in that league, and I'm wondering if that's a major vote against it for a lot of college coaches.

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think the critical thing is, and I think if you study it, the successful franchises are when the coach and the general manager work together. Those franchises excel. When there's friction there, one of them goes. Sometimes both of them go.



You could be in good shape one week and be gone the next.

But there are some really good franchises with really talented people in that league. Again, I've gotten to know them a lot more recently because of my conversations with Luka, with Keegan, with Kris, with Joe Wieskamp, and they come into our practices, they come in and they spend the day. Sometimes it's scouts, sometimes it's general managers. The phone calls will come from the coaches.

I get a sense of what the pulse is in that particular organization, what they're looking for, what they need to know from me in regard to one of my players, that kind of thing.

I've been really impressed with the organization, and as you well know, every game there's 15 scouts, 15 representatives, maybe more, depending upon where the game is. They're all doing their homework.

But that's why you see a lot of coaches, they want to do both jobs, and that's really hard. Doc Rivers was really good at it, for example. Really good at it.

But even then, the Sixers have a general manager. The Sixers have administration. Doc is a great guy, he's as good as it gets, so they get along well. They work together. They have a G-League franchise; how do we work with that? How do we develop guys? They're drafting guys younger and younger, so you'd better be able to understand how to develop guys in the G-League and bring them up, put them down, get them playing time, et cetera.

Q. You mentioned the concern with the free-throw shooting more than the 3-point shooting. Why is that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, we were in a position to go up a couple times, either tie the game or go up eight on the road. We missed seven and I don't remember if there was a one-and-one in there, so maybe you're leaving more points up there that you're not getting. In a game like that, you're playing a game in the low 60s, every point is critical.

Q. Ahron is obviously being more aggressive on offense, which you like, but is that also maybe why the turnovers are there because he's being too aggressive at times?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, we're going to have to have a different approach in how we looked at those turnovers, if you know what I mean.

Q. I sort of know what you mean.

FRAN McCAFFERY: You're a smart guy. I've known that about you. (Laughter).

Q. How key is it for you that he seems really confident with his mid-range game now, whereas maybe a month ago he didn't look like he wanted to shoot?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, if you remember, he was a great finisher and a pretty good pull-up guy, little floater, and then he had the wrist injury and he was struggling to finish, and I think at the end of last year, I think it affected him, and to his credit, he got better and really worked on it in the summer, and you're seeing more aggressive -- I want him to be aggressive like that. Even with the six turnovers and how they materialized, I still want him attacking. I want him getting downhill.

I think he's got to find some people. There's a fine line, when you have a guy that's getting downhill, how often do they shoot, how often do they give it up, how often do they pivot, play off two and live to fight another day. I thought there was something there. There's nothing there. We'll throw it back out and we'll run something from there.

As he's gotten more and more confidence, more experienced, I think he's been much better at that.

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