

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Coach Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q. When you look at Ohio State at this point, how have they evolved since you saw them last month?

FRAN McCAFFERY: They're an interesting team because they play hard, and they've got a lot of pieces, and they're right there. Obviously unfortunate situation against Wisconsin. But obviously they have our attention. They beat us by 16. They're in the fight every day, you can tell. Chris has got them still playing hard, playing together, and I think when you look at their -- like I said, you look at their individual pieces that they have, they've got a lot of different guys that can score. They've got a lot of different guys that can post-up. They compete defensively. They've got some three-point shooters, and they've got some depth. A team that we have the utmost respect for.

Q. Is Sensabaugh the best freshman in this league?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Certainly one of the top, yeah. There's some other good ones, too, but he's really gifted offensively. That's not to say that he's not a good defensive player, but he has a really keen sense of how to score, how to get his shot off, scores from all different locations, how to use his body. He's impressive.

Q. Not that your players needed to be reminded, but the Minnesota game, you're always preaching to us that you've got to respect everybody. Is that just another example, the fact that they kept it close with eight scholarship players?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, they've been doing that all year. They got blown out a couple times. I think they've come to the realization, Garcia is probably not going to play. That's what it looks like. A lot of it falls on Battle and Cooper, but those other kids are gaining confidence. They've got a really good freshman class. They've got some size, and they've got some speed. They fight you on defense. You've got to make shots to beat them.

We had a stretch where we were and then we weren't, and then we did at the end. But they're going to keep coming. Ben is doing a good job with them.

Q. What did Michigan State do to Ohio State to hold them to 41 points?

FRAN McCAFFERY: That score was a little bit -- you're right, they held them to 41. That's impressive. But it was a little bit deceiving because the last four or five minutes they really extended it. It was a pretty close game up until then. They just kept scoring. It went from like nine to 10 or 20 pretty quick, and Walker went off a little bit. He's playing really well.

Q. Your press has been pretty effective defensively as of late. What makes it so effective, and what are some advantages and disadvantages of playing that --

FRAN McCAFFERY: There's always disadvantages because you're opening up the floor and giving them opportunities to attack you and throw over and shoot threes. It can be problematic when you play a team that plays four guards. But it's something that you can play different ways. You can be more aggressive with it, less aggressive with it. We were aggressive the other day, then we weren't so aggressive. It can be more of a contained press. A lot of teams play contained press, and we kind of do both, but we just feel like it disrupts rhythm for the most part.

Q. You also have 6'8" Kris, 6'9" Patrick off the press. They move well laterally. How big is that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, it's good on a number of levels. It limits what you can see and you can flex at the two and create some offense with your defense. Both of those guys are pretty smart, how far to go and when to break it off and match up. For the most part, if somebody tries to attack them, they can slide their feet, as well, so that helps.

Q. Is that something you maybe look for in recruiting when you're deciding who to pick? Do you have like a picture in your mind about how they can help offensively as well as defensively?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think with the way we play, as much length as you can have. I think a lot of -- like any coach now is probably going in that direction, whether you're playing man or zone you need length. You want



guys that are active and have a sense of that. What kind of feel do they have, the momentum shift, the time and score, who's on the floor for them, are we in the bonus or not, do we need a steal, do we got to come up, are we going to be more aggressive now because we're running out of time, we can be less aggressive, we have the lead. As long as the clock is moving, that's good.

There's a lot that goes into it. You're not just flying around. There's a purpose to it.

Q. Looking back at the Ohio State game in the second half, being connected on defense in the half court was an issue in that second half. What have you seen from the team second half of the Purdue game, throughout the Minnesota game that's kind of rectified those situations?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, we have to be better than what we were up there, and give them credit. They have a lot of different guys that go off the dribble. I mean, a lot of different guys, not only the guys that start -- he's changed the starting lineup three or four times, so you've got Sensabaugh, you've got Thornton, Likekele, Sueing, Gayle, and he's got a multitude of guys. Key will come out and try to back you down more so than face up and take you off the dribble. But there's a lot of guys that are going.

So you've got to be able to hold your ground and then make decisions on your rotations and try not to get burned too badly on open threes.

Q. 25 games in, how do you feel about this team? What's been good? Where have you been pleased? Where would you like to see improvement or maybe an extension of improvement?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I think we've absorbed our share of injury and sickness and so forth. I think we've competed, been fairly consistent in that area. For the most part, we've shot it well. We've had some games where we have not, and obviously you hope that that doesn't happen.

But I do think when we haven't shot it well, it hasn't been because we took bad shots. They just didn't go in. We still move it and share it. From that standpoint, pleased with the unselfishness of the group. Obviously we have six games left, and all against really good teams. So you've got to make sure that you're locked into the game plan, that you're staying true to who you are. We're going to push it, but we're going to be smart with it. We've got to fight defensively, and we've got to fight on the glass.

Did a really good job on the glass on Sunday. Obviously a lot harder against Purdue with their incredible size, but did

not do a good job there.

So there's a lot of different things that you can improve on, but at the end of the day you've got to defend and rebound.

Q. How much does the turnovers you've been forcing defensively not negate some of the rebounding issues you've had --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's crucial, if they're getting 10 more rebounds than you, you've got to combat that. We've got to make more threes or you've got to get some steals and some easy baskets. I do think that if you're having success with the press, it energizes you in a lot of ways at both ends. I think that's important.

We're going to continue to play that way. I've probably got to get some guys some more minutes and keep some guys fresh. The last two games I haven't played a lot of guys.

Q. What did you think about facing the press as a point guard when you were playing? Did it bug you? Did you say bring it on?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know what, it was a different time. Like when I played, we still didn't have the three-point shot. But more teams did press. More teams played zone back then. Fewer teams were playing zone because of the three-point shot.

But it would really be a function of who were you playing against. I would welcome a press against a lot of people because I was really good at breaking it. But then there were teams, remember the really good Georgetown teams, we played them, they were really quick and really big and physical. That's a lot harder because now it's a function of, okay, get it to the point guard and he breaks the press. That's one component of it. But when you're playing a team like that, you'd better have five guys playing together and moving and coming to the ball and giving you options because you're going to get trapped and you're going to get forced up the sideline into a trap; can you see it coming and all that.

You saw more 1-2-1-1 than you saw man-to-man and you saw man-to-man run-and-jump, a lot of 2-2-1. There wasn't a lot of 1-2-2 the play we play it until Rollie Massimino started playing it. I've told you before, that's where I learned it, studied it with him.

I liked it because you can be aggressive with it, but it still protects the basket because you're not pressing to give up lay-ups, so as a point guard, my job was to try to split, get through it and get lay-ups or dunks for my teammates because you do that, they're going to get out of it.

We're trying to press you and keep it on and not give up easy baskets because then you can keep it on. It's also a function now -- in those days, there was no clock, so now it has additional benefit. If they take 15 or 17 seconds, there's 13 seconds left to try to score. That's stuff you have to guard.

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