

# University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

## Coach Fran McCaffery

### Men's Basketball Press Conference



**Q. How good is it to be home, or is too much made of that?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I don't really think much of it. Kids are playing hard. We haven't shot it well a number of times. But we have shot it well at times.

Just got to make some threes. Kids are playing hard. They're playing defense. They're moving it, sharing it. It's not like we're taking bad shots.

**Q. Do you believe in the familiarity with rims and backgrounds? Do you think too much is made of that? The players are used to them, whereas the Big Ten you shoot maybe once a year.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think there's just natural advantages to being at home, and those would be some of them. I think that's true everywhere. Every league, every team, every sport.

**Q. It seems pronounced in basketball, though; is it the noise, the intimacy, the surroundings?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's everything. All of that. But we've played some really good games on the road, too, and so have other teams.

**Q. You were 0-3 in the Big Ten and there was no panic. And I know people on the outside panicked, but is it still just business as usual? You have a sixth-year senior, a fifth-year senior, a lot of age and experience on this team.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, throughout the course of the year, a lot of things happen. You have injuries. You think about when we played a 10:30 game in New York and got home at 5 a.m., and we had to play less than 40 hours later. The kids played great.

You just move on to the next. You don't obsess about it. We bussed home yesterday, we didn't bus home after the game. So what? We're going to bus home one way or the

other. What difference does it make what time we get back?

You have to stay locked in, and if you have some guys that are out, you step up and do your job.

**Q. Have you guys been getting more threes up since the struggles, or is it just kind of doing the same thing?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: We're doing a lot of shooting anyway. You get to this point of the season, you're not going two and a half hours hard. Nobody does. In those situations, you're always going to get a lot more shots up.

**Q. You referenced that you feel like your team is playing the right way. Does that make it easier to coach them through this slump versus if the shots weren't falling and you felt like they weren't playing hard?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, that would be a problem. That would definitely be a problem. You'd have to address that before you even worried about anything else. As long as you have the right guys taking the right shots, you just keep moving on, and that's the way I've always done it. The guys are in a good place that way. Our guys will come in and they'll put the time in. They'll come in on their own.

Each guy knows himself better than anybody else, so if a guy feels like his shot is a little bit off, he'll come in and work with our skill development coach. We have a practice facility, we have the shooting gun, and just keep working on it.

**Q. How big is veteran leadership this time of year?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's huge because it's a long season, and we say it all the time, what does that mean. It's a grind. It's not like the old days when you start practicing October 15. Even then, you get into February, it seems long. But when you start practicing in June, it's a long time. You have to be able to understand the components of whatever part of that season is, it's the beginning, let's practice. We're just trying to get better. We're trying to get to know each other and we're trying to get in shape and then we're mixing in our lifting. At some point, you start playing other people, and at some point you

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get into conference playing, at some point you're traveling more.

Getting everybody through that, especially the young guys, is always going to be critical. That's where the veteran guys come in. They typically don't rattle on the road.

It's amazing, we were right there in those games without shooting the ball very well, so nobody is panicking.

**Q. Do you ever say to yourself maybe the season is too long? Have you ever thought that?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I never did. Going back to my playing days, I always liked the games and always wanted to play the games. I think the players would tell you the same thing. Everybody is trying to peak as you head into March if you can. It's always a little more difficult if you've had some struggles along the way with your personnel.

So we've had that. So has everybody else. Some have had it a lot worse than us. You have teams let's start with multiple starters out in our league. You just keep staying positive with everybody and get ready for the next one.

**Q. Is it human nature, is it possible to keep an even keel all the way through a season?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's an emotional game. There's going to be highs and lows, and you always want your players to enjoy the ride.

But I think if you get too high and too low, that will lead to issues that will be difficult to overcome. You have to have a businesslike approach, and that means how you take care of your body, how you prepare, what's your mindset at home, on the road, what's our specific game plan for this team. These guys have to know and understand that.

But at the same time, they've got to know their bodies, and we've got to get rest, we've got to eat right, because it has to be sustained. If you get too excited -- it's one game, either way, bad loss, great win. It's one game. The whole concept is to continue to get better, individually and collectively.

So you hope to recruit guys that know and understand that. We have guys that do.

**Q. Michigan State, how have they evolved since you last saw them?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: They're going to be pretty consistent. Their guards are terrific. Hauser is playing really well. Getting Malik Hall back was big for them. He came back

for our games, but he's a terrific player. Sissoko is coming into his own as a starter. He was off the bench last year. Akins is shooting the ball well. You know what you're going to get. They're going to play hard. They're going to play defense. They're going to be physical. They're going to push it. That's why they're good.

**Q. The last five games, you have shot the same amount or fewer free throws than your opponents. Concerted effort to kind of be more aggressive and get to the line more, or is there something going on there?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, we're still driving the ball. We're still throwing it inside. I think whenever you break down a loss, you're going to say, okay, was our motion game maybe not as good as it should have been, was our execution of our sets, did we not run enough. But our emphasis is still pretty much exactly the same is what we want to try to do when we come down the floor.

**Q. Did you get a chance to reach out to Coach Izzo at all with the tragedy?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I reached out to him immediately, yeah. If you look at all the coaches in our profession, he might be the very best at reaching out to people at various times for various reasons. He's very connected that way to our profession and to relationships. I reached out to him immediately and told him I was thinking about him.

I thought his response and his speech was spectacular in helping to bring that community together. He's a guy that can do it. He's done a fabulous job.

**Q. Did he reach out to you with Patrick?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Oh, yeah.

But he's reached out to me multiple times for a variety of reasons. And both times with Patrick, yeah.

**Q. I was talking to Connor, and he said there are times when you and he butt heads basketball-wise, what's your viewpoint of that, and is that a function of him looking to be a coach?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think he sees the game differently than most. He's been here six years. That helps. He grew up in the gym, in the locker room, at games, played it his whole life. I honestly don't think we butt heads very much, but we do disagree at times.

He's also a guy that is going to speak up, so other guys might have some thoughts and they just don't say anything. He does. To me or to his teammates or to the assistant

coaches. And he's pretty confident in what he's saying.

But I do think his delivery is typical very good. Like he's positive.

Now he will get on some guys once in a while, and there have been a few times where we've disagreed. But normally we see the game pretty much the same way.

I think that's why we've talked about it before, but he wants to coach. I think he wants to be somewhere else. He's like, I know how we do it here. Not that you can never continue to learn, but be more important to learn from someone else, how do other people do it, and as you guys know, there's a lot of different ways to do this job, different philosophies, whether you play fast or play slow or change defenses or don't or how you recruit, how you prepare practice, how you push the guys, how you push them in the off-season.

There's so many different ways to look at it, and I think it's important to learn all that as much as you can, as you progress in the profession. I've been very lucky with the coaches I've had a chance to work for, work with. That's the other thing. You've got a lot of experience across the board, you go somewhere else -- like you work here, you've got guys that have been head coaches before like Spurlock and Coach Dillard and Billy Taylor and then Matt, you think about the coaches he's been exposed to, just across the board. Now you go to the pros, you might have three guys on the staff that have been head coaches in the NBA before.

I'm excited for him to go on that journey and continue to learn.

**Q. He also went from Bergie to you.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: That was an upgrade. (Laughter).

**Q. But Bergie, defense, defense, defense, he's got a different way of looking at the game.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, he does. But it's funny because for a guy that coaches the way he does, the players like him. There's times you think, well, boy, he's on them all the time, but there's a respect there, and they really like him, and they love playing for him. It's always fun to watch when Connor and Patrick come to Jack's games they'll always spend some time with Coach Berg afterwards and chop it up.

**Q. How would you assess where your freshmen are right now?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: They're fine. I say this all the time, they both need a little bit more playing time. They both deserve it. They're both good players. We've kind of gone with our veteran guys. Josh has been playing a little more than Dasonte, but I've got to get them both in there a little bit more, and their time is coming.

**Q. Do you feel good about the progress they've made?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, those guys are solid. You put them in, they don't make a lot of mistakes. They know what they're doing. They play different spots. They both are playing defense. They're both terrific people, above the fact that they're really good players.

**Q. As Filip's career comes to an end here, how can you describe his evolution here, and did you get what you expected or even more?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's been phenomenal. He's been everything we hoped he would be. He's a phenomenal teammate, an incredible worker. He's a winner. He just wants to win. He's great in the locker room.

This year of course he's speaking up more. Last year was his first year. We say it all the time, he's a veteran guy. This is his first year here; he's still learning. I would call something and guys would know what they're doing and he'd be looking around like wait a minute, I've got to think about that for a second, and the guys were great with him. Well, this year he's on top of everything. Incredibly mature guy to have, and somebody that everybody in that locker room loves, and certainly as coaches we appreciate what he's doing. He just keeps getting better.

**Q. Can you talk about his consistency? We were talking about it, just like every night you're going to get**

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FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you think about it, you're going to get a phenomenal effort. He's going to compete. He's going to battle you physically. He doesn't wear down. He's gotten, I think -- you see him with a lot more confidence this year, especially with his offensive game. Like he's going to score. Last year he would defend and rebound, score some. This year he's doing it all.

I think he really expected it to be that way, and I'm really glad that he grew the way he did last year and came back for this year and had that opportunity.

**Q. How would you describe Kris's leadership style?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Kris is pretty quiet. He pretty much takes care of his business, and that's fine with me. When

he talks, it's not a lot, but when he does, people are going to listen to him because everybody respects him and truly liked him. He's a very likable guy. Great to be around.

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