

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

Monday, November 6, 2023

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Fran McCaffery

Men's Basketball Press Conference



Q: This is the freshmen, this is their first real, meaningful action. Do you say anything in terms of advice or do you let the team handle that and go through that process.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: We scrimmaged Wichita State, they were good. Quincy did a good job. You have one scrimmage and one dress rehearsal. I am not going to make a big thing about it, we take a business-like approach. They can lean on the upperclassmen if they need to.

Q: You went with the hockey, line change substitutions in the exhibition. Is that something you plan on doing or is that just the exhibition.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I will typically put a couple of guys in there first. If I am going to play 10, they're going to get in there eventually. I have not said I wouldn't play more than 10 because I am comfortable with the next two or three guys as well.

Q: How has Dasonte looked in this new role?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: He has been good. He plays both ends, he is creative, gets to the rim and he's really going to compete. He is moving the ball well. Like I said before, it's a tough one because Josh Dix is right there and has played extremely well. So have the two freshmen guards.

Q: What is North Dakota like? What do you know?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: They have five guys back that are good players, a couple of junior college transfers and they have a good freshmen class, deep. They are big, but also have a number of 3-point shooters. I am impressed on what I have seen on film. We don't have anything from this year, but they have five guys back.

Q: Brock strikes me as a player with the next play mentality, he doesn't seem to let it linger on mistakes and plays with good pace. Is that what you've seen throughout the summer and leading into the season.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: That's how he has always been. He just plays, he doesn't get too high or too low. He's always going to be an attack guy. At this point, once you get to this level, you improve at this level, you better have an expectation for yourself that, I can play here, I can play on this stage, I know what I'm doing.

It used to be a lot harder. I've said this before. When you didn't start practice until Oct. 15, it was hard for those kids. Now it's just not. We start practice in June and they know everything that we're doing. Just go do what you do.

The reason you were recruited here is because you can play. Obviously some guys have more talent than others at certain areas. We try to blend that. They're all really good players, they're all tough kids, they're all smart. Just go play.

Q. You've seen a good amount of these guys, the exhibition game last week. Anything that you want to see from last week to this week?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: The only thing you ever really want to see is you just want to see improvement. That's both individually and collectively.

Most of our guys have played pretty well. Maybe some of them didn't shoot as well, have as good of a game. You want them to be better.

We got out-rebounded in the scrimmage. We had 14 threes in the last game. Those kind of things you want to see improvement on. You have to play better defense than that.

Q. Patrick is coming in here in a bit. What do you want to see from him this season?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I want to see him play like I think he would expect to play and like I would expect him to play as a fifth-year senior. He's an experienced guy and we've seen him be a leader. He's always been a scorer. I want to see him be in the best shape of his life and be able to compete defensively, in particular be able to make plays when the game is on the line.

Q. Does he have to score more this year than last year? What do you need from him this year?



FRAN McCAFFERY: I would like to think he would, just the natural progression of it. He's capable of it. Last year we had Kris up to 20, Filip had a really good year. We have I think a pretty balanced group in terms of production. It's not like he feels he has to go get 20 every night. I think more than 10 is certainly something he would expect and certainly I would, too.

Q. There were games last year that Payton really seemed to be a voice in the huddle. How have you seen his leadership take that next step?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You look around, it's like it has to be him, it has to be Patrick, it's has to be Tony. Those are the three guys we talk about all the time. They're veteran guys on the team.

I mean, Josh and Dasonte, I feel like are veteran guys, but they're only sophomores. It's the other three. I wouldn't count out Ben, except he's new. He's a smart player, good player. He works so hard. He has the credibility to speak up. He's still trying to figure everything out that we're doing. He's done a good job of that.

It's those three guys. Payton I think has embraced that role.

Q. You've had Connor to lean on as a coach on the floor. Has one of those guys emerged as the coach-on-the-floor guy?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's Patrick and Payton in particular and Tony. The thing about Tony, we're going to move him around a little bit. I think he's always been a gamer, but he hasn't been a big vocal guy in that regard. I've challenged him to be a little more like that.

He certainly was when he was in high school. He was the guy. So hopefully those three guys can handle it.

Q. All your guards are interchangeable. How much easier does that make it for you?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, in particular when you see a lot more teams playing four guards, if you put four guards out there, some of them have to be able to shoot, some of them have to be able to make plays. But you can play two point guards. The point guards we have, they all can score. That's helpful. We don't have like a pass-only point guard. That's important.

Plus they have some size. I consider Pryce a guard, even though he's 6'7". Josh is 6'5". Tony plays big. That gives us I think the flexibility we need.

Q. It seems like Ladji and Owen had some high-low action in the exhibition. Is that something you worked on with them?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Ladji is really good as a passer. Owen can really finish. I think those two guys I think have meshed well together. They both have instincts. They both have skills that enable this them to not just be a scorer and a rebounder.

The game has evolved. If you want to play at this level, you have to be able to run, dribble, pass and shoot, play on the perimeter, play in the post. A lot of teams play with an open post. We do. North Dakota does. That doesn't mean there's not going -- somebody is going to be in there at some point, whether it's a spinning post or...

Watching those guys kind of play that way is when I recruited them to do, what I wanted them to do.

Q. After your last game last season, I asked Perkins what he wanted from the coming season. He said he wanted to be known as the best guard in Iowa history. Does that fit with what you know about him?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think he has that mindset. There have been some great guards, as you know. I don't think you ever want to tell somebody they can't accomplish what they set out to accomplish.

I know this: he's worked really hard, not only this summer but pretty much since he got here. When he got here, we were kind of loaded up back there. We would have contemplated redshirting him, except everybody got a free year that year. Turned out we needed him. It was really good when we put him in there. I think that was the impetus to move him into the starting lineup the following year.

Yeah, I appreciate him saying that.

Q. You've been through a lot of opening games as a head coach. Do you still get kind of excited, butterflies before the first game, or is that normal at this point?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I take a pretty businesslike approach across the board. The first day of practice, the first game. We try to make sure that our guys understand the game plan based on who we're playing but most importantly what we want to do in general, then maybe specifically for that opponent.

So if you start getting too hyped up, too high or too low, I don't think that works. I've been around long enough. I

watched it a lot when I was an assistant for Coach MacLeod. He came back to college, coached 82. He played 82 plus pregame, playoffs, coaching a hundred games a year. You better be locked into what's coming next.

Let's fix what needs to be fixed and let's try to improve and let's prepare, not get too down after a loss or too excited after a win. You see that a lot. Big win, okay but we have to play again Tuesday, so... That's kind of how I am in terms of that.

Q. How much do you like the closed scrimmages? Would you like to have more of the open ones?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I like for us to be able to play more. The great thing about it is we played more than 40 minutes. We played different combinations. I've said this before: you want to work on your zone, you play a zone in a game, they hit a couple shots, you're getting out of it. Now you stay in it, work on it, try to get better. You let your young guys figure it out, they're in the wrong place.

You're not worried that we're going to lose this game by three. You try to win the next segment. We zero the score at each segments. Do situations, up one, down one, three minutes to go, you're pressing, they're pressing. Now, okay, we're tied or we're down one, we're up one. Do we have a timeout, that kind of thing.

You just get so much more out of it. I'd like to be able to do that more often and not make it a big deal. Whoever started calling them secret scrimmages is idiotic. There's nothing secret about it on a Sunday afternoon. We're not publicizing it because it's a learning opportunity. Hey, we won. Hey, we lost. So and so played great. You know what, we got better that day and they got better that day. That's the whole purpose of it.

Q. Krikke and Filip, the way they were able to integrate, Ben seems --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Seamless transition. No question about it. A lot of it is attitude, who he is. But his work ethic is tremendous. He's really talented. His game also fits our style, which is one of the reasons why he came here in the first place. I think he knew we would utilize him in the right way. I'm excited.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports