

# University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

## Fran McCaffery

### Men's Basketball Press Conference



**Q. At the beginning of the year you mentioned that you could see any of your four freshmen starting. Do you think that possibility still stands?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. I mean, they're all going to play. Whether they start or not, it's a possibility. Right now we'll go with what we've got.

**Q. How big is starting for these guys? Does it mean a lot? Does it mean a lot to you? When we ask you about it sometimes we make too big of a deal of it.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't think it's an unfair question, okay. I think you're right; everybody wants to start. I think we have a unique roster in the sense that we're deeper probably than we've been, so those guys are going to -- whether they start or not, they know they're going to play. They might end up playing more than the starters, depending upon how the game goes.

It's not like, OK, we have five starters, we have two or three subs and those guys know what their roles are and they play that role. Sometimes you have to go bigger. Sometimes guys get in foul trouble. Sometimes a guy has a sprained ankle so somebody else gets to play more. That's kind of the team we have now.

**Q. Did your two days out in San Diego help you identify anything you want to shore up, or did it confirm anything?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, I think it was good for us. We played two really good teams, two very well-coached teams that challenged us in different ways. Obviously, we have more of that coming as you look at our schedule.

It's just an opportunity for, in particular, the young guys to get playing time against teams of that caliber in a different setting. We have obviously a tough team coming in here on Wednesday and then two difficult road games after that.

**Q. I think you've referenced just what it was like recruiting Owen and his process, but can you share**

**more about what you remember from that?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. He was brought to our attention by his AAU coach early. Gavin Sullivan thought he would be a great fit for us. We went and saw him, and he was terrific, and he was being very heavily recruited as a young player, which isn't uncommon for guys as big as he is, but his athleticism and his talent was obvious, so we knew we would be battling a lot of Big Ten schools and other regional schools, Notre Dame, places like that. He was offered by everybody like that.

As I said before, he was very proactive in the recruiting process. It hit him fast, so he and his family dealt with it. His dad was a good player. His mom was a real good player. His mom coaches. They know and understand the process. So they began the process, started visiting places, and he did his homework. He was very thorough and didn't want the process to continue on, so he committed pretty early, so we were thrilled.

**Q. Josh played well second half the other night. What do you like about where he's at right now?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Very rarely he doesn't play well. He's just a really good player. He plays different positions. He guards different positions. He makes shots. He very rarely makes mistakes. He's tough, physical. I just think he's a terrific player.

**Q. How much now that he's healthy -- you could see kind of at the end of last year.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I was kind of surprised at the beginning of last year. As I said to you before, I probably should have played him more. I do think he's a little bit more explosive this year perhaps, understandably, considering what happened at the end of his senior year.

But he never complained one time that he was hurting, or he didn't miss one minute of practice all last year.

**Q. I'm curious on that second unit with Brock and Josh, do you prefer one to be the primary ball handler versus the other?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: If Brock is in there, he's the primary handler.



**Q. I wasn't there, but at Big Ten media days you spoke about things that could be done here to enhance the fan experience. Wednesday's game is one of those mid-week 8:00 games that's not really great for anybody. Is there anything that can be done to persuade people to sacrifice for games like that?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know what, you're either going to come to the game or not. Complaining about what time it starts, that's over. The games start when they start. That's the way it is.

Now, we do make it easy for you to watch it on TV, so we have a lot of loyal fans that don't come, but they're incredibly loyal, and we appreciate that.

But the complaint about the start time, at some point it's got to go away. The games start when they start. It's not every game is at 7:00 and you play Thursday-Saturday. Okay, that was 1978.

**Q. At least it's not 9:00.**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Could be worse, exactly right. Could be 9:00.

**Q. Do the players care? When you're playing a 9:13 game, does that mean anything to them?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: That was a little different. I think a lot of East Coast teams end up playing -- it's not 8:10 or 8:15, it's 9:15. I would say to everybody, I don't think anybody likes it. Nobody wants to play at 9:20. Players, coaches, fans -- I don't think the fans mind it if they're watching it on TV. A lot of people watched that Creighton game on TV back east. It started late, really late.

Obviously it's for TV. They put a triple header on that night, and we were the third game. We don't talk about it, like don't make a thing about it. It's not a positive, it's not a negative, it's whatever time the game starts, we've got to be ready to play.

I think obvious Mike's point is, yeah, maybe not necessarily the best thing for the fans, but it's not changing. When you sign a \$7 billion. If the fans can make it, great. If they can't -- like I said, our fans support our team whether they come or not. They watch. They pay attention. So we appreciate that.

**Q. What do you know about North Florida?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I've been impressed with them. I obviously know Matt really well. He does a terrific job

there. Been down there about 15 years. I knew him before that.

Play hard, shoot a ton of threes, but they're not playing nuts. They're not running around shooting crazy -- they move the ball, they share the ball, they emphasize shooting a lot of threes. Over 50 percent of the shots they take are threes. They've got a lot of different guys that can shoot them. It's not just one or two guys.

But been an unselfish group. They've got some good wins. We've got to be ready.

**Q. When you're putting together your non-conference schedule, how do some of these games come together? Are these coaches you know?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: It wouldn't be as much that as -- it's like putting a puzzle together. You have an opportunity to -- you've got to fit your schedule. You want a certain number of home games. You've got to fit them in before finals, after finals. Finals week can't play. Obviously we have two league games in December. Used to have the challenge games, now we don't, but now we have more West Coast trips. You start out putting it together, and you want to challenge yourself as best you can with good-quality opponents, and that's what we've always tried to do.

**Q. It seems like it's almost a daily thing where one of these so-called mid majors either rises up and bites somebody from a bigger conference or at least pushes them to the very end. What's the state of college basketball? Are there 200 good teams in America because some nights it seems like it?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I think that's a good point. I don't necessarily look at them as upsets. There's incredible parity in college basketball. Some of it comes from -- every team it seems like is a veteran team anymore. We seem to be one of the unique ones playing as many legitimate freshmen as we are.

But everybody has got four or five transfers, junior college transfers, redshirt guys. Now that's another challenge because you might have a different roster, like you don't build it the same way. You've got seven or eight new guys, you've got to try to get them to play together, but still, they're veteran guys, so they don't rattle. They don't go on the road and rattle.

A lot of times you see what you might consider an upset at an MTE. Well, when I was on the mid-major side, we would always try to get as many of those games as we could, different than playing on the road. You'd play in



Florida and there's 1,200 people at the game, you look at it a little bit differently. You don't have the home-court advantage, you don't have necessarily referees from your conference, 15,000 people rooting for you guys, a lot to overcome. They have to travel, you have to travel to that location. It's different.

But I think after a while, which I think is what your point is, when it happens over and over and over and over, not necessarily an upset.

**Q. You're a handful of wins away from becoming the winningest coach in Iowa basketball history. I don't want to ask you as much about that, but from what details you are willing to share, the story of how you got the job at Iowa and kind of what you remember from that?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. It was a situation where there were a number of jobs open that particular year, which is every year. We all know that. We had a pretty good run at Siena, so I was involved in some situations that I felt like it was important that I look at because I had a great job that I loved with terrific people at Siena, so I wasn't looking necessarily to move, but there was opportunity, and that's what we do professionally.

As I've said from the first day, I was very familiar with the history of University of Iowa's basketball program. I had coached here twice. I recruited against those guys when Tom Davis was here, friends with Gary Close and Rich Walker and Coach Davis, so knew those guys well. We played them when I was at Notre Dame as an assistant.

It was clearly the job that I wanted, if it would ever come to fruition. I interviewed on that basis, like this is the one if it comes to pass, and was obviously thrilled that it did.

**Q. What does it mean to you to be close to the winningest coach in history?**

FRAN McCAFFERY: I'm very aware of the history. You look at the names of some of the great coaches that coached here. Just to be considered with those guys. But again, more importantly at the front end to be considered to be the Hawkeye coach, knowing that Lute Olson and Tom Davis, Ralph Miller, George Raveling, you're talking Hall-of-Famers. It's an honor, something that I take great pride in.

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