

# Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 11, 2022  
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA  
Gainbridge Fieldhouse

**Iowa Hawkeyes**  
**Fran McCaffery**  
**Tony Perkins**  
**Keegan Murray**

Postgame Press Conference



**BIG**  
MEN'S BASKETBALL  
**TOURNAMENT**  
INDIANAPOLIS 2022  
PRESENTED BY **TIAA**

Iowa-84, Rutgers-74

MODERATOR: We are joined by Iowa Head Coach Fran McCaffery, along with Tony Perkins and Keegan Murray.

Coach, we'll start with an opening statement, and then we'll go to questions for the students. Coach?

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: Really proud of our guys tonight. We beat a really good team. My opinion, one of the best-coached teams in the country. That much respect for Steve Pikiell and that group of veteran guys, Geo and Harper, McConnell, Mulcahy, and Cliff.

So really proud of how we battled back after a slow start. They came out on fire, we just kept coming. I think our defense was really good. It's a hard team to out-rebound and we did that, so that says a lot about our guys. Happy and ready to move on.

**Q. Tony, watched you at Lawrence North, you're back home again. Look at that smile on his face. Talk a little bit about your performance today and how everyone saw what Tony Perkins can do at Iowa?**

TONY PERKINS: A lot of people that see me through high school through now know what I can do, and now I'm able to bring it to the next level is big. Knowing I'm playing in my home city and seeing everybody in the crowds that I know, grew up with, it really boosts my energy a lot. That's pretty much it.

**Q. Keegan, breaking Luka Garza single-season scoring record, what does that mean to you, especially to do it on this stage and a game like this?**

KEEGAN MURRAY: Yeah, for me last year I really just tried to learn from Luka as much as I can. Obviously, when you have the National Player of the Year on your team, you just kind of want to resemble him in a way. But for me to break his record's a big credit to him and what he's done at the university and just what -- how he's carried himself and how he's kind of put in the footsteps to become great here at Iowa. So it's an honor for me, for sure.

**Q. This is for both you guys. You guys have won 10 of 12. How do you describe of confidence that you're playing with right now. Even when you get down in games, it seems like you're not rattled at all?**

KEEGAN MURRAY: Yeah, I feel like, for us, we've kind of learned how to get -- we've gotten knocked down. We've learned how to get back up on different stretches. And we know that if we're down a little bit, we can get on a run at any point in the game. So for us it's just keeping the mentality that just never give up, whether we're up 20 or down 20, that's just kind of the mindset we've had these last stretch of games. It's just a credit to our guys, sticking with our scout and doing what we do best. And I feel like we've been sharing the ball really well.

**Q. Tony, Rutgers was pushing, I think they cut it to eight kind of deep in the second half there. You come down the court and looked like you lost control of the ball in the air maybe and put it in off the glass. I guess just how big of a moment was that, and like did you honestly think that you could get that shot to go in?**

TONY PERKINS: Actually, I was shooting a floater and I got hit going up, so it kind of bobbed out once I shot the floater. I didn't think it was going to go in, so I thought the chase and get a put-back, but it went in, so I'll take it.

**Q. Tony, can you talk about the confidence you're playing with now, and the confidence that Fran has in you to go out there and just be yourself?**

TONY PERKINS: Personally, you know, I had a shoulder injury, so that was on my mind a lot. But now with that being done and me taking care of that has really boosted my confidence. Coach has always told me to play my

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game, do what you do. And I'm always willing to be out there and do what I got to do for us to win in any situation.

**Q. Keegan, for you, yesterday you were up there, Jordan as well, didn't shy away from the fact that you wanted this rematch with Rutgers. Kind of walk us through the approach coming into this game and maybe not letting the emotions or the thoughts of what happened in the last game affect the play on the court today?**

KEEGAN MURRAY: Yeah, for me it was kind of a game that I felt like we should have won. We didn't play as well as we could have as a team. And I feel like not just me or J-Bo, but our whole team felt like this was a game we that had circled on our calendar for a while and we wanted to see them again at some point in the season, and just play our hardest out there. They're a really good team, they're really well coached, really physical, really good defenders. And it was a game that we really wanted. I feel like we played really well for 40 minutes today.

**Q. Keegan, you guys are now into the semi-finals. As a team, how much does this tournament mean to you guys in wanting to maybe make a run at a championship and bring home a conference title?**

KEEGAN MURRAY: Yeah, for us it's just taking one game at a time. We know what we're capable of, and we've had these goals and aspirations early on in the season, and we knew that we were going to be a good team and we knew that we had to be playing our best basketball at this point in the season. I feel like we're doing that and just take it one game at a time. Indiana's a really good team, they're really well coached and they're playing really well right now. Just get back, look them over and see what we need to work on to try to beat them tomorrow.

**Q. Keegan, just five days ago, free-throw shooting did you guys in at Illinois pretty much. Today you're 25-27. Can you just comment on the reversal?**

KEEGAN MURRAY: Yeah, I think for us just to see one go down as a team, we went 10-10 the first half for free throws so I feel like for us that kind of boosted all of our confidence to just go up there and make free throws. Obviously against Illinois we missed a lot down the stretch, we missed a lot in the second half of that game and we knew that that was kind of a learning experience for us and I feel like a lot of our guys stepped up to the plate today and made free throws when we needed them.

**Q. Fran, I'm just curious what you feel about Rutgers' chances for the NCAA Tournament. Are you confident that their name will pop up, and if not, is it an**

**indictment of the metrics that are used, the formulas that are used to pick the field?**

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, I'm kind of baffled by the question. I'm not trying to be disrespectful. To me, it's a no-brainer. That's an NCAA Tournament team.

But the wins that they had this year, the wins they had on the road with the talent that they have, you know, I think sometimes you look at metrics, but sometimes, you know, like we say, you have the eyeball test. You look at that team and it's an NCAA Tournament team, and that's what they are.

**Q. Just looking ahead to this Indiana matchup, it's been a long time ago you faced them. Any thoughts? Obviously, a different team for Iowa, and I'm sure you saw a different team today in Indiana?**

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: You have to be really impressed with the job that Indiana's done here in particular. You know, they lost some games down the stretch, but I don't think in any way it was indicative of the caliber of team. They lost a couple really tough games. The ball didn't bounce their way and they just kept coming. And they showed up here I think determined; we're in the tournament, like we're going to the tournament. And now they think they can win it, this one.

You have to be respectful of the way that they've continued to compete. Obviously, it will be a great atmosphere with them being here.

**Q. Coach, with Keegan breaking the single-season scoring record, now that we're at this point in the season, how would you assess how he has stepped into that dominant role on the team and how he's handled everything that's surrounding him this season with all the attention that he's getting without (indiscernible)?**

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: You really can't do it any better. He just stays the course. He's very even tempered. You guys have seen that on the court, off the court. And then as the game goes on, he affects it in so many different ways. I think that's what people appreciate about him. You look down and he has 26 rebounds, he defends, he draws fouls. We can go to him or we cannot go to him and he just finds a way. He's doing I think a much better job making plays for other people as the season has gone on, which he's had to do because of the way teams are guarding him. Just phenomenally impressive in every aspect. Breaking down his game, but I think breaking down who he is, his demeanor on the floor, his competitive instincts and his

desire to win.

**Q. Coach, your team might get punched first, they always punch back. What's the predominant trait that your team has that allows them to do that?**

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, I think we have a lot of players that are really confident in themselves, so if I start going to my bench, those guys typically produce, and then when I go back to the guys that maybe weren't playing as well, they typically produce again.

But it's a strong confidence in themselves. I've talked about that all the time. It's -- my primary objective as their coach is to get them to play with supreme confidence because that's the only way they will ever be the best version of themselves. Their teammates on the bench are really positive with them, we pretty much stay positive with them. I'll get on them once in a while for what I feel are egregious mistakes for things that we've already covered repeatedly, and we don't make many of those so we kind of stay positive with them. I think it's really important in this league, especially with the caliber of teams that you're playing and the different styles that you see on a daily basis, you've got to be able to punch back.

**Q. Kind of teeing one up here for you, but two years ago, I think there were a lot of people who thought why are you giving two scholarships on the Murray brothers, who are these guys. Why did you, two years ago, and what do you have on these guys?**

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you know what, Mike, we've talked about this topic a fair amount because a lot of people felt the same way, but what I've said publicly, anybody that watched them, I don't think that I was that far ahead of the curve. Like if you watched them play, you would have come to the same conclusion that I did.

It wasn't a favor, it wasn't a gift, it wasn't, hey, we'll take a shot at two 6-8 kids. That's not how I operate. I have a responsibility to this program and to the institution to recruit Big Ten caliber players. And we don't always get it right, you know that, but I was 100 convinced that those two kids were going to be really good, and so was my staff who watched them.

Not a lot of people went to their high school games and they didn't play on a high profile AAU team, so they didn't get the exposure or the recognition that other people got. That's not their fault. They took care of business and they worked on their games and they worked on their bodies and they were dominant players when they did take the floor. So what they're doing now is not a shock to me or my staff or quite frankly anybody that watched them develop.

**Q. One lineup that worked particularly well was Joe, Payton, Connor and the Murrays. How did you see them flip the momentum in the first half, especially Kris, who seemed to be really active?**

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY: He was. I thought Payton did a great job on the glass. So did Connor. Connor throwing the alley-oops, we got our transition game going, but I think the critical thing there was in that stretch, in the beginning they were taking it right through us and then we got some consecutive stops. You've got to rebound. They're a team that they'll miss, but they'll go back and get it, they'll go back and get it again, they'll go back and get it again. And we got it and we went the other way with it and that team really clicked with the transition opportunities at that point and big change in the complexion of that game, you're right.

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