

October 20, 2011



An Interview With:

IOWA STATE FRED HOIBERG

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Iowa State coach Fred Hoiberg. Coach, welcome and your thoughts about the upcoming season.

COACH HOIBERG: Good morning. Excited to be here today. Just a couple of opening remarks about our team right now.

Really like the effort that our group has brought to this point. It's what you look for, I think, early in the season, is how hard your players compete. We've got a lot of guys right now that are very hungry to get back out there and get on the floor.

A lot has been talked about with our transfers that sat out last season. We had four of them. Royce White, Chris Allen, Chris Babb and Anthony Booker. And those guys are very excited to get back on the court. Royce White hasn't played a game in two years after leaving Minnesota without playing any games there.

Those other guys haven't competed in a year. So they're excited to get back out there, get back on the floor, and you can tell, with their effort level in practice.

Execution-wise, we still have a ways to go. We're turning the ball over too much right now. We've got big shoes to fill at the point guard spot from last year in Diante Garrett who is one of the top point guards in our league led the Big 12 in assists last season.

So what we're trying to find out right now is who will be the guy that has the ball in their hands in late-game situations and tight situations.

And I don't know who that is right now. We've got some versatility. Royce White is a kid at 6'8", 265, that can handle the ball. Really one of the few guys on our team that I think has the mentality of a point guard.

When he gets by a guy, he immediately makes that instinctive pass, and it's a great luxury to have, a player that's that size that can go out on the perimeter and make plays.

You don't have situations very often when you have a big out guarding a player like that and pressuring him. So Royce will give us that ability to get us into an offense, I think, at times. But I also need him on the block.

He's very strong. He's a guy, benched 185 pounds 28 times the week before we started practice. He's as strong as any player I've been around.

He's got the biggest hands of any player that I've been around as well. And I've played some pretty big ones in my years in the NBA.

So I'm excited to have those transfers. I'm excited to have some returners from last season. Scott Christopherson had a tremendous junior year. He's the second all-time leading 3-point shooter in the Big 12 Conference history. He's a guy that can handle the ball at times for us, but I'd rather have Scott coming on screens.

Chris Allen is another player that can get us into an offense, but it takes away from what he does best, which is coming off screens and knocking down shots.

Chris Babb is a player that brings us experience as well. He averaged 9.5 points at Penn State. His sophomore season. So to have those guys, those transfers all set out last season, but they built chemistry together. They played on the scout team day in and day out. They stayed home and watched games when we were on the road playing our games. And tried to find things that we could have done better to close out a lot of the close games that we lost last year.

Chris Allen has two years of Final Four experience. He was the leading 3-point shooter on those Michigan State teams.

So to combine all that with a couple of the freshmen that I really like, Percy Gibson, Tavon Sledge, and then a junior college player that made 115 3s at Cowley County last season. He meshed those together and tried to put the best group on

the floor that you possibly can.

Q. Coach, Royce White went through a very difficult time back at the University of Minnesota, legal issues. Questions about his maturity. Can you help? Can you tell me how you've helped him grow as an individual and make the transition to Iowa State?

COACH HOIBERG: Sure. Royce, he's been awesome since he's been at Iowa State. We did a lot of -- we did a lot of background work on all the kids we brought in.

I talked to Tubby Smith about Royce. I talked to Tom Izzo about Chris Allen. I talked to a lot of people that have been in these kids's lives and they talked about them being good kids.

The thing when we brought Royce down that we really liked he took full accountability for his actions at the University of Minnesota.

He met not only with our basketball staff but he also met with administrators. He met with our athletic director, other people that worked in education.

And everybody had the same conclusion: That we need to give this kid another chance. And he's come in and done a terrific job, not only on the floor but off as well.

He's had over a 3.0 GPA every semester. All those guys set an all-time GPA, it was over 3.0, five over a 3.5. So those guys really worked hard in getting their lives on track. And, again, we do a lot of background work on these guys. We're not just if somebody comes available and we're taking him, we're taking him. We do a lot of work. And a guy like Royce is someone we felt, all of us felt, deserved a second chance.

Q. We always like to compare players to other players, is there somebody we can liken to Royce?

COACH HOIBERG: He's a very unique player. You know, Royce is Royce. Like I said 6'8", to have that ability and that mentality is pretty rare. You don't have many guys that can beat people off the drill. He's extremely explosive as well when he gets by a guy.

He can facilitate the post. I've played with a great passing big in Kevin Garnett. His ability to see exactly when that shot was there and to deliver that pass, so much of shooting is timing, is when you can get the ball in the right spot at the right time it's so much easier to knock down that shot. Royce has that ability. As soon as that help comes, boom, that pass is on a string.

...when all is said, we're done.®

ASAPsports

visit our archives at asapsports.com

And those guys can rise up and knock down that shot. You know, other guys we have right now, he can dribble, they dribble into trouble which leads to a turnover. His ability, the mentality that he has is probably the best we have, somebody that can make plays on the perimeter.

Q. We talked about likely to be point guard by committee, do you think as a group everybody handling the ball will be able to produce similar to what Diante did last year?

COACH HOIBERG: I don't think so. Diante, he was fourth in our league in scoring and first in assists. I don't think we have that guy. But -- and, again, it's going to be a work in progress for us to see. You know, we probably won't know going into game one who that guy is. It's going to take us playing in a situation that gets tight, that gets tough, to see who can handle the ball.

We're going to have an early scrimmage here at the end of the month, going to Nebraska. And that will give us a pretty good feel, because of the way Doc Sadler has those guys prepared, and the way they pressure the ball, you know, to see who can handle it.

We play very good exhibition game against one of the top D2 schools, Grand Valley State, who will give us the greatest as well. So hopefully this will evolve. It's a process right now. But I'm seeing a lot of things I like with certain guys with the ball in their hands and things that concern me. We'll see. It will all play out.

Q. It seems like people understand that you've brought a lot of talent in with the transfers but there's still a question of whether or not it will mesh. Do you have a concern with that? And what steps have you seen from them that maybe that won't be an issue?

COACH HOIBERG: I think all coaches are concerned about their chemistry. You know, it's as important as your talent, is how your group meshes together. If you have that chemistry, you find a way to win close games. You grind it out. If you don't have it you're not going to be very successful.

The good thing about those transfers is they played together all last year and built that chemistry.

We had the advantage this year of taking a trip to Italy, going on a foreign trip, and spending ten days together, playing four games, and had ten

practices leading into that trip.

The thing I really liked about our trip to Italy, it wasn't great talent. But you could see the unselfishness. We had six guys averaging double figures on that trip.

When the extra pass was there, it was made. And that's what you want to see out of your group is making the unselfish play. I love that about the trip, and I loved how hard we played. If we continue that, you know hopefully things will go well.

Now, that being said, we didn't face tight situations. There wasn't late in the game when we made mistakes. That's when the group has to stay together. It's easy to lead and play when things are going well. How does the group respond when adversity hits us, and I think that will tell -- that tells a lot about any team.

Q. You played in this league, in the old Big Eight, are you excited to see the full schedule come back, where you go everywhere and everyone has to go to Ames?

COACH HOIBERG: It's certainly going to be a tougher schedule, you know, to play 18 games, to play everybody at home, everybody on the road. The thing I like about it, it gives you a true champion, the fact that you play everybody like that.

I'm excited for our fans to get to see everybody, every year at home, you know, our fans are very excited this year. We have as good a home crowd as I think anybody in the country.

When I was playing at Iowa State, teams didn't expect to come into Hilton Coliseum and win games. My junior year we didn't lose a game all season and we were not very successful on the road.

That's the atmosphere we're looking to get back, teams coming in fearing to play at Hilton Coliseum, and hopefully we can go out and win our home games.

You have to do that if you're going to compete for your league's title and then go out and steal some on the road.

But I'm excited for our fans, to answer your question, it's a great format and to be able to see every team in the league is a great luxury for our fans to have.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports