

# patrick mccaferry

**N**erves are stretched taut, the clock ticks down and the buzzer sounds. Patrick McCaffery wipes the sweat from his brow and jogs to the locker room. He started his basketball career at age 4 in North Carolina, but it got more serious in New York.

"I liked New York a lot," he said. "In Albany, the people, my dad's team, my team and friends were really nice."

But when his dad's job changed, so did his home.

They moved to Iowa when he was in fourth grade, and he joined the Barnstormers, a competitive basketball club. In fifth grade, he tried out football and he played baseball until sixth grade.

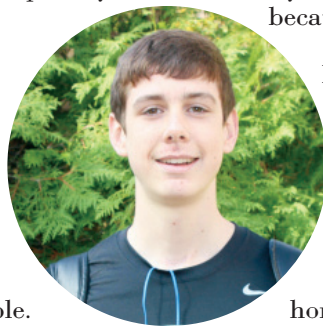
"I never felt pressured into playing," he said. "It's just nothing made me happier than basketball, so that's the sport I chose."

Having his dad coach the Hawkeyes brings many benefits. He attends every game and meets new people.

"His job is really fun," McCaffery said. "We get a lot of trips out of it, like Bahamas, New York, Seattle, Orlando. And I can't wait for Europe in 2017."

After school, McCaffery typically goes to the gym to work out and practice. One day a trainer commented that he seemed short of breath, so McCaffery went to see a doctor.

"I got a head and chest x-ray, and they showed me how my trachea got narrow at one spot," he said.



After the x-ray, he got an ultrasound that "took forever." Later, in a room with his mom, McCaffery was told he had a tumor. "I didn't know what to think, or what it really meant," he said.

Then on March 19, 2014, he had surgery to remove the tumor along with half of his thyroid. Two days later—a day after his birthday—his parents woke him early to go back to the doctor because the tumor was cancerous.

McCaffery said he had to go on a special diet so he could get a CT scan. "It was awful," he said. "I couldn't eat anything."

After the scan, he had to drink a liquid that made him radioactive to get rid of any of his thyroid that the doctor may have missed. He said he couldn't be within 10 feet of people or they would risk radiation poisoning.

His brother, Conner, said, "I was in the car coming home from basketball practice when my mom called me and told me my brother had cancer."

The two have a close, open relationship. "I'm with him almost all the time," Connor said, "and we hang out and talk about almost everything."

Patrick got back on the basketball court April 27, 2015.

"Through it all, I've grown more appreciative of family and friends," he said. "And I'm happy I can play basketball."

—By Lizzie Raley

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