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An Interview With:

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. There's been a lot of talk of an up-tempo attack as you take over this program. What are the biggest challenges you face with a team used to a half-court game?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it's understanding that we want to run, but we don't necessarily want to quick shoot the ball every time. It doesn't mean we're going to shoot the ball five, six, seven seconds into the shot clock every time. We still have to make good decisions, and we're still going to grind it at times. We're still going to be under control. So it's still got to be our best players with the proper spacing with good decision making, taking good shots. That's the only way we're going to win games.

But we do want to make sure we establish an attack mentality. So I think what we have to make sure we get figured out over these next couple weeks is to make sure we're playing faster, to make sure we're attacking the rim, but at the same time we're under control making good decisions.

Q. How important is Cully Payne as far as getting him working into this new system and how have you seen him progress since you got here?

COACH McCAFFERY: The first thing that Cully did was he got in great shape because he knew that we were going to push the ball on makes and misses. So in order for that to happen he's got to be in great shape. He's really looking good, and he's more confident.

I want him to look for his shot more than he did last year. He wants to run the offense, he wants to set his teammates up, he wants to engineer victory, which is I think what you want from any point guard. But I need him to score. I

need him to look for a shot when he puts it on the deck so that teams will respect the fact that when he drives, he could take it himself. And he's been doing that.

So obviously he's critical, as is Bryce Cartwright. But I think when you're playing up tempo, it's crucial that all of our players understand how to play that way. It wouldn't just be something if Cully did it and everybody else would follow suit. We have to make good decisions when we're feeding the post. When are we giving it up on the break? When is the best play in transition no play at all? And you're not going to push it and shoot it quick every time.

And that's probably been one of the more difficult things when we have worked out collectively is understanding that. But we've got a lot in, going back to the springtime and obviously in the fall and after September 15th when we could get everybody together. We've got a lot of stuff in, we've just got to sharpen it up a little bit.

Q. Could Cully play the 2 a little bit?

COACH McCAFFERY: Cully could play the 2 a little bit. We could kind of have a little bit of a throwback backcourt where you have two guards, and either one can push it, either one can fill the lane. They both can score, more slashing. I think Cully's jumper looks good, so he would probably be the guy that would move over if he played with Bryce.

Q. Collectively since you've had a chance to look at the talent level and kind of survey what the Big Ten is going to be about, what's your thought about that?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think when you look at this year in the Big Ten in particular, it's arguably the best it's been probably in a long time. When you look at three of the top five in most magazines and five of the top 18 in a lot of them. I saw one magazine had seven teams in our league

going to the NCAA Tournament. So I think when you look at those teams, okay, why are they where they are? Well, they've got some premier players, but they've also got a little more experience than we do right now.

So what we need to do is focus on our corps, eight, nine or ten, whatever that's going to be, that would depend on Devon Archie's health, and make sure that everyone not only understands his role but accepts his role and understands that while we want to play faster, we can't turn the ball over. We have to take care of the basketball. We have to understand who the better shooters are and who are the screeners and who are the drivers, and make sure that we play defense, because sometimes what happens when you're playing fast on offense, you don't dig in defensively like you should.

We can't have that. We have to make sure that we're locked in defensively, whether we're in man, whether we're in zone, whether we're changing defenses, whether we're trapping ball screens or not. We have to be locked into stopping people, limiting them to one, because if we do that, then it's much easier to run on misses than it is on makes.

Q. What have you done since the day you were hired until today to get this program in the direction that you want to take it?

COACH McCAFFERY: I've done a number of things. First and foremost is try to develop the kind of relationship that I feel I need to be successful with my players, the ones who are here. Obviously we needed to bring in a couple players in the spring, which we did. We're very happy with our re-recruitment of Zach McCabe and Devyn Marble and then also being able to get Bryce Cartwright and Melsahn Basabe to join us. So once we had our roster solidified, we wanted to get a jump on the '11 and '12 classes, which I think we've done.

So I think you look at it from a player relationship standpoint, recruiting standpoint. I wanted to reengage our fan base. I was very active on the I Club circuit, and that was fun and enjoyable, especially when you think about how passionate our fans are, which I already knew.

But when you go throughout the state and you get to meet the Hawkeye fans, you know what they're looking for, and I said when I sat here not that long ago that it's a sophisticated fan base. They know what good basketball is. They've seen it, and they know what a good coach is.



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So it's incumbent upon me to make sure that we not only change our style of play but we do it in a way that's going to help us win games. So yeah, we want to play fast. I've said that over and over. But we have to play intelligently, we've got to take care of the ball, we've got to shoot a high percentage.

If we're going to beat the teams in this league, it just can't be a rat race out there. We've got to make the other team really work defensively, really work offensively to score, and we've got to be able to get in the trenches and make sure on the glass that we're okay.

The key for us is to make sure that we establish a deep enough bench so that we have a fresh group out there to play the style of play that we want to play so that at the end of each game we're the team that's in better condition. Not only that but more so in March at the end of the season, as well.

Q. Your first year at Siena you took over a team that had single digit -- won 15 games, surprised a lot of people. What in that blueprint are you going to be able to duplicate here, not only wins and losses but getting the team to play the way you want them to play so fast.

COACH McCAFFERY: The thing about that team that I will always remember is that from the beginning they accepted their roles and bought into everything that I asked them to do. And then when the game started, they competed like no other team I ever had. And I think that's got to be what the goal is here.

We didn't care what people said, we didn't care what people thought, where we were picked to finish, and going into the last two weeks of the season, we were in contention for the league championship. We ended up coming in fourth. We were picked tenth, came in fourth, which got us a bye for the conference tournament. I think the team that won it that year, we actually beat them at their place.

A lot of the same things would correlate to what we walked into here. I think I have to be realistic; it's one thing to do that in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, another thing to do it in the Big Ten with the quality of teams and the fact that they're clearly established on a national level. So it'll be a lot more difficult, I think, but not so much to get them to accept their roles and to

compete harder than everybody night in and night out. I think that's what our challenge is as coaches is to make sure that that happens.

Q. This a group of players that have kind of been beaten down the last few years, whether it's by losing or slower attendance figures, that sort of thing? And did you have to massage them maybe from a mental standpoint to pick them up a little bit when you came here and get them focused mentally?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know that I did. I think it's a legitimate question, and it might be something that has to be ongoing. But their attitude was pretty good. I think that from the beginning they wanted to hear what the plan was, and they wanted to hear how they fit in, and okay, we're going to play up tempo, but what does that mean, like what's behind that.

Those of whom decided to stay, they bought in right away. The others weren't as confident, and that's fine. The group we have here is ready to compete, and I haven't had any difficulty at all coaching this group, whether it be on the floor when we were going forward in time, when we put the whole team together, you watch them work in the weight room. They believe in each other, they believe in me and our staff, and they believe we can win.

Q. What's Devon Archie's situation?

COACH McCAFFERY: Getting better. Two or three days ago was the first time he started going up and down five on five, and he's not 100 percent, but I think we're going to be able to get something out of him. I feel good about him. Physically he looks good in terms of strength, and his length will be helpful. He's got a pretty good understanding of how to play, especially in the motion game, which will be our primary offense. So I think from that standpoint I feel really good about him.

He's a guy that needs some confidence. He had a rough year last year with injuries and with some personal issues, and right now I think he feels like we've put our arms around him and encouraged him, and has everybody else at the institution.

This is his chance. He's going to get a chance to play, and I feel good about his contribution.

Q. You talked about the last couple months and re-recruiting people. Is it nice now



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tomorrow to focus on basketball and get back on the court?

COACH McCAFFERY: No question. It's time to get out on the floor and start working with this team. We broke film down, and we'll be breaking that down every day and trying to help each individual player get better and to make sure they fully comprehend the offense and what we expect of them.

I think any coach that sits here at this time of year, it's what motivates us and it's the most exciting time of year as we prepare for the first day of practice.

Q. Talk a little bit about Bryce Cartwright, a transfer from Fresno State.

COACH McCAFFERY: Bryce has a body, and he's not a young freshman; he's been around. He was at Fresno, he was in Paris. He wants to be here. He had other options. He's a terrific point guard, but he's a physical player, he can get into the lane, and he's not what you would call a shooter, but he can shoot, and he's probably more of a scorer.

I really like what he brings to the table, and that's why we recruited him. We were very, very particular in the springtime in not only what talent we were looking to bring in but what individuals we were looking to bring in. He really handled himself well in his visit, and I like his attitude. He's very upbeat, he's very confident in himself.

He's from Compton, California. He comes from a family of basketball, and I think the first thing that jumped out at me when I watched him play on film is this kid has really played a lot of basketball. He really understands situations, he understands how to find people on the break, he understands when there's space to take it and when to pull it back out, and he can get down and defend because he's physical.

So I think he's an ideal fit for us here and an ideal fit in the Big Ten.

Q. How important was it that you signed another true point guard?

COACH McCAFFERY: Oh, we needed -- especially when Ben Brust left, we needed another guard, and actually I think he's a better fit for us. Nothing against Ben, but Ben is really more of a 2 and we needed I think more of a 1 because we had Devyn Marble coming in, so we had a shooting guard with Matt Gatens and we had Cully Payne,

so we needed another point guard without question. But the other thing is I needed to be able to know that I could play he and Cully together, and I think he needed to know that, too, to know he was going to get enough playing time.

Q. What are the most important things you want to establish in the first week of practice?

COACH McCAFFERY: I just think a mentality of how we approach practice and how we're going to try to get better and how we're going to compete and how we're going to sustain effort. We can't play in spurts. We're not at that point where we can play in spurts and win games. We have to play every possession and make an impact on every possession. If we do that, we'll be okay.

Q. When you went around the state kind of getting a feel for what you were getting into, how many times were speed of play and style of play bought up?

COACH McCAFFERY: Quite a bit, but I think a lot of that is a function of you think about the great teams that have played here and who their coach was and how those teams played, in particular Tom Davis' teams stick out and George Raveling's teams. Those teams ran. That's what the folks in the state have seen. That's what they're used to seeing.

I think it's really hard in college basketball today to play slow, unless you're winning a lot of games. People just don't want to see that. And there are some teams that do it, and they get by with it and they win and people come to appreciate it. But let's face it, people want to see a fast break, they want to see an alley-oop dunk, they want to see athletic plays, they want to see talented players doing things in transition, and that's what I enjoy coaching. That's the style that I enjoy.

I let my guys play. At the same time, like I said, there's got to be a plan behind it. You just don't turn them loose and play with reckless abandon. We can't have that. But we have to be able to understand that sometimes when you give talented players space, it's a lot better than coming down and playing against a stacked defense every possession.

Q. Basabe had some breakout games this summer, turned some heads. Do you expect him to make an impact right away?

COACH McCAFFERY: I do. He's looked really good. He's a terrific young man. He's a

very, very talented player. We needed help at that position. His length, his explosiveness and his offensive skill level, while it will get better, it's pretty good right now. I think a lot of people who saw him average 31 and a half points, it's not going to be like that, not in this league, it's going to be more physical and more defensive oriented. But he can finish on the break, he can take off 12 or 13 feet from the basket and go in and dunk the ball; he can make the baseline bumper, the elbow jumper, the trail jumper; he can catch it in a trail position and drive it into a gap and make a play; he makes his free throws. So I think little by little what you're going to see is a really good player become great.

Q. Do you go into the season with a starting five in your mind, or is this thing open, are these positions all open for competition?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think every coach has a starting five in mind, but it's certainly not set. We have some close battles in some positions, so that will unfold over the next month or so.

Q. Do you like the preseason, how it prepares you for the Big Ten, the non-conference slate?

COACH McCAFFERY: We have a very challenging non-conference schedule and there's no question that will prepare us for the Big Ten. I think the way it's laid out this year is good. The tournament in particular is going to be very difficult.

I think when you look at the fact that we play the other three in-state programs, I think that's always something that's going to be -- when you think about a playoff atmosphere, all of those games have playoff atmosphere, and that's a challenge in its own right, plus they're good teams.

So I think the way we have our schedule laid out makes sense for this team.

Q. What is the goal to developing an attacking mentality?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, it's consistent, so when we get the ball off the rim, we go. So the coaches are spaced accordingly, push it, push it, push it. If we're pressing, we're up. You're coming up, you're up in the passing lanes, you're pressuring the ball and you're coming up into the passing lanes. So it's an aggressive mentality at both ends of the floor.

So it's got to be taught. It's got to be explained to them on film, and it's got to be

reviewed but then it's got to be constantly reinforced.

Q. You were talking about how there's some competition right now. Are there any one particular battle that you're pleased to see both guys competing as they have to this point?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think probably the most competition right now is between the two returning big guys, Cole and Brommer, and the two younger big guys, Basabe and McCabe. Those four guys have really gone at each other, and it's been healthy and it's been good to see.

Q. Do you have the players to play your system? It seems to be a question that comes up, are these guys athletic enough to play?

COACH McCAFFERY: They are athletic enough to play this style. Keep in mind, we're not playing like Loyola Marymount. We're not playing that way. We're going to dig in defensively. We're going to change defenses. We're not going to lock into one defense. So what you need there is not only fairly good athletes, but you need little basketball IQ, as well. So we have good athletes, good basketball IQ, we've got toughness, and we've got players who want to win and want to compete.

And then the question is, as I said in the very beginning, is our decision-making on offense; when are we going to shoot it five, six seconds into the shot clock and when are we going to grind it? And that's going to take time. It's going to take time and a lot of tape review and a lot of discussion.

At some point it might take, okay, you're a screener, you're a shooter, you're a driver, a little more specific role definement at that point in time. But right now we're letting the kids play, we're seeing what they can do, and we'll go from there.

Q. How do you balance fair expectations of the team without limiting them as far as expectations go?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I don't talk about expectations. We just approach every game as if we expect to win that game, and right now all we're trying to do is establish our style of play, teach what we need to teach and get the kids competing and accepting one another and understanding how to play with each other. What somebody says in a magazine is what fans want to read about, and it's always a different experience when you're picked first.



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I've been on both sides. I've been picked first, I've been picked last. I don't really change my approach that much one way or the other.

Q. How does Jarryd Cole look right now, not just his recovery from the ACL a few years ago, but also as a senior has he progressed as much as he should now in his fourth year?

COACH McCAFFERY: I've been really impressed with Jarryd from a lot of different perspectives. Number one, his attitude and his leadership has been phenomenal. When we're in the early part of August and September, somebody has to be the guy that's a little more vocal than everybody else, and that's who he is. He's vocal, he's respected by his teammates, and he's a talented player. I like to think he's going to have a really good senior year. Physically he looks probably as good as he ever has.

He also had some surgery in the off-season, and that would have been something I think that would have really limited a lot of other players. But he came back amazingly quickly, and you can tell that he's really hungry to have a phenomenal senior year.

Q. Where does Eric May fit into your system and how much can he improve his sophomore year?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think of all the players that we have, the player that may benefit the most from the change of style would be Eric May. He's got blinding speed. He's one-dribble dunked from one step beyond the three-point line. He's that explosive. And I think what you need to do is get him the space that he needs, and you're better able to come by that in transition than you are in half court.

But at the same time, he knows how to play half court. He knows how to curl and backcut. He gets open, and he's already got that attack mentality.

When I watched film from last year, I think the one guy that was most hampered by the slower style was Eric May. You could see that he wanted to go sometimes and they were pulling it back, and that's how Todd Lickliter felt like they had to play, and I respect that. But I think Eric is really one that will benefit from the different style.

Q. You have a lot of newcomers on this

Coach McCaffery - 10 14 10

team. How much is your success contingent on them contributing and playing well right from the start?

COACH McCAFFERY: We need them to play well right away. They don't have time to be freshmen that are making mistakes. They have to play like veterans essentially immediately, and that's why I really like what I've seen so far in particular from Basabe, McCabe and Marble. We really need those three guys to understand that they're going to get a lot of minutes, so it's probably going to be at least one of them in the starting lineup, and then after that your other ones kind of have to consider themselves almost as starters.

Q. Could you ever see Cully and Bryce both starting at the same time?

COACH McCAFFERY: That's a possibility. I've committed to Matt Gatens pretty much as our 2 guard, when I talked about peeling some weight off of him, he had bulked up so he could play some forward. I said, look, you're not a forward, you're a guard; get down to 208 and stay there and drive the ball to the basket, and you're seeing him be way more explosive now. He's actually driving and dunking the ball like he used to, and I need him to kind of be a 2 and think like a 2.

Q. Matt Gatens played everything but center in his time here. How much is that going to help him knowing he's a shooting guard the whole way?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it's going to help him immensely. When you look at Matt you know he can shoot the ball and he's still strong even at 208. The other side of it is he's a really good post-up player, and that's another reason why I'm sure the previous coaching staff wanted to move him up front is he's got a good back-to-the-basket game. Most 2 guards don't have a back-to-the-basket game, and he's got a body, as well, plus he shoots 90 from the line so you kind of want to get him the ball in there.

But I want him to establish the fact that he can drive the basketball to the rim, not just to his right, which has always been the scouting report on him. We've really worked with him on that, driving the ball both ways, and he knows how to move without the ball. He's not afraid to screen. A lot of shooters don't want to screen. He screens and ultimately finds himself open. So he's got a real good feel for how to play. I think when you

take somebody like that that you want to highlight, you want to make sure they kind of locked into one position and stay there.

Q. You mentioned playing all three other in-state teams. There's been talk in the past about how that hampers scheduling ability. Are you committed to keeping those three teams on the schedule going forward?

COACH McCAFFERY: Not necessarily, but right now I don't see any change in the foreseeable future. I'm fine with it. I think it's one of those things. When you have playoff atmospheres earlier in the season, it's sometimes more difficult for the coaches than it is for the players. The players, I think, like it, the fans like it. It gives the media a lot more to write about. But at the same time, it does limit some of our scheduling opportunities.

As you look down the road, we've got the ACC Big Ten challenge and we've got the league, and with the addition of Nebraska, how many games are we going to play? Are we going to be committed to an exempt event every year? Do we want to try to instead of playing some of those teams, do we want to start playing some made-for-TV games?

But I think for me personally, I'm looking forward to the in-state challenges. I know what Iowa-Iowa State is. I guess I really don't know because I haven't gone through it yet, but I saw it a little bit with football.

I know what Northern Iowa has. We've played them each of the last two years. I know how good they are. I know what a great coach Ben is. I know what it's like to play up there; it's not easy.

So I think from that standpoint, it makes a lot of sense.

Q. Did you have an expectation of what it would be like to recruit to Iowa? Has it been more difficult than you thought? Has it been about what you thought or easier than you thought?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think I knew it would be a challenge. But I'm excited about what we have to offer. I think when you look at our facility, and in particular the renovation, I think we can bring a recruit and his parents to our campus and say, look at our commitment as an institution. Very few facilities will be like ours as we move

forward, when you think about a strength and conditioning facility of 11,000 square feet. I always knew what Carver was, and I think it's a phenomenal home court situation.

So little by little, we've got to get the elite players to say, okay, that's where I want to go. That's what I want to be a part of. And statement I have to be realistic and know that I've got to show them a little something myself so that they say that's the guy that I want to play for. That's all about relationships. Recruiting is about relationships, and I think a lot of times when there's a coaching change about the time that mine was, that's when most are, I think everybody expects some miracle to take place and all of a sudden five all-Americans are going to come. But we haven't had any time to develop any relationships.

We spent a lot of time on the next two classes and feel good about the success that we've had so far and the guys we're involved with. We feel good about all of that as we move forward.

Q. Is it a matter of them seeing how you play? Is it hard to go and translate without them seeing what you're into?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it's only legitimate to expect that they would want to see it.

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