

**December 2, 2010**



An interview with:

## **COACH McCAFFERY**

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach McCaffery.

**Q. Any better idea timeframe with Cully?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: No, I think it's too early still. I think the thing was he wanted to postpone the surgery until the end of the season. But it got to the point where it became evident he needed surgery. When they got in there, it showed he clearly needed it. So any time you have a situation like that, sometimes it takes a little bit longer. Sometimes you get in there and it's not as bad as they thought, sometimes it's a little worse than they thought. In his case, unfortunately, he's got some work to do.

**Q. When you look at Eric, he's made quite a few steals this year. Is that just a system or a result of the way you play? Does he get credit for it, and how much does your system get credit for it?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: To be honest with you, I think the credit goes to him for this reason. I think what you're seeing is a young man that it was always in there. The talent, the ability to do the things that he's doing. He just needed to trust himself and be aggressive and take advantage of his incredible athletic ability.

So you're seeing a guy who is attacking the rim, and he's attacking his opponent defensively and he's up toward the ball, he's anticipating, and he's trying to make plays. That's what you want.

I don't want our players back on their heels trying to let the opponent dictate to us. You want

to try to dictate to them as much as we can, and he has the ability to do that. And he's able then to get out in transition where he's phenomenally effective. So that's been great to see.

**Q. You had bench players play a key role the other night. Bryce was in foul trouble early and through the rest of the first half you had Devon playing point. In the second half, Matt was off the court for a while and the bench players were able to play a key role. Have you seen them take a step up for you this year or are they playing about as good as they started?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I don't think there is any question about that. Obviously, at the beginning of the year we had Cully and Bryce, now it changes with Bryce. We certainly didn't expect him to get two fouls early.

We had worked Devyn Marble to get him ready, and I think what he's proven so far is that he's a gamer. He's got some talent. He can score. He's not afraid. He sticks his nose in there on the glass and rebounds the ball. He is going to be aggressive offensively, and he's not a mistake maker, so that's critical.

With regard to some of the other situations, Stoermer, Stubbs, Archie, those guys, they've all produced. Obviously, we go to Stubbs in the first half because Marble was tired, so we wanted to get to the media timeout and go from there. And Stubby was pretty good.

Then Archie's been good. He wasn't as good in the last game as he has been, but I like him. He's had a little problem with his leg. I think that hampered him a little bit, so hopefully he's getting better.

But that gives us sort of a three-headed monster in the post. But even then I went to Basabe and McCabe in that stretch, and that's just going to happen. The same thing happened in the Xavier game. You have a lineup on the floor that is the one that clicks and makes it happen, and

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that is who is going to be out there. Sometimes it won't be who you think it is. It certainly wasn't who I thought it would be, but that's who it was.

**Q. Was there ever the thought in your mind of putting Bryce out there again in the first half at any point? Or was it one of those things where once he picked up the two fouls it was not going back to him until the second half?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: It's always in your mind. Even with Matt at the end of the first half I took him out with two. We thought about putting him back in, but I try not to. There was no reason in that game to do so because we had a double digit lead.

**Q. Is that something you establish with your players early on or do they kind of just learn that as they go? Do they know going into the game if they're hot?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: They know if they get two fouls they're not going to play the rest of the half.

**Q. What if there is a lineup that's doing better even though you're a starter who's going to do something, do they learn that on the fly or do you let them know that's not part of your style?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: You know to be honest with you, I never thought about it. To me that's just how it always has been. You utilize your bench. You sub, typically for rest or foul trouble, then you have different combination on the floor. Some are performing better than others at any given time.

The start of the second half we didn't play well. We didn't play well at all. We gave up the lead quickly. We said we didn't want to quick shoot the ball.

You go on the road and the team's making a run. You can't quick shoot the ball, and that's what we did. While we were making mistakes offensively, we weren't defending. So that's how the lead evaporated and how they got a lead.

Now to our credit, I thought the kids really bared down. There was enough time left to dig in defensively, start executing better, and chip away at the lead. Then you need somebody to make a play.

Eric May I thought made an unbelievable play, steal, breakaway and one. Gave us the lead

back. I honestly thought right there that we'd win the game.

**Q. Where do you feel Matt is health-wise, conditioning-wise?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: He's not 100%. Conditioning I don't think is too bad. But health-wise, he's just not as comfortable as he was. You look at his rebound numbers, his steal numbers, I don't think he's going to lead the league or anything, but they'd be better. He can't stick his left-hand in there and knock the ball away. He's a little reluctant to go get a two-hand traffic rebound. He's trying to make sure that he's effective at the offensive end.

So I think eventually you'll see him be more productive in a lot of areas. His minutes have been solid. He's second on the team in minutes played per game. I've got a lot of confidence in him and have no doubt that he's going to continue to get better.

**Q. Has he expressed any frustration with that other than just not being 100% healthy to you?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think he's frustrated. You know, his numbers are down from what he would have expected. He's worked too hard. He worked extremely hard in the spring and in the summer and the fall. For the first three and a half weeks of practice he was as dominant a player as I've ever coached.

So now he's out for a month. He's got this big thing on his hand. First game back we're playing a team like Xavier, a really good team, really athletic, and I think he's performed pretty well. I've been pleased with him.

You look at the shooting percentage is 28 from the field, 21 from three. That's not him. Those numbers will improve.

**Q. When you look at Marble, is it a matter of he is a quick learner on the court? When he gets in, he makes maybe an initial mistake or gets out of position early then all of a sudden he get it's?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: The thing with him, I just don't think he rattles all that much. He's going to be aggressive. He's going to be pretty solid.

You know, I think as we move further into the league, teams might come after him a little bit

more at full court and trap him more or press him more, deny him. Make our two and three handle the ball. We'll see how he does then, but that's going to come with experience.

The beauty of him is he's got the size so he can see over the double teams. He gets rid of it before he gets himself in trouble, which any point guard should do, and he scores.

If he is going against a guy that is smaller than him, he can get you on the side of him and raise up and shoot right over you. He's a terrific mid-range jump shooter. Kind of a lost art today. I think his three ball will come and I'm okay with him shooting it. But we run him off screens, we do a lot of things with him because I trust him.

**Q. How encouraged have you been by Melsahn's performance in the last couple of games especially?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: For him, I think it's really important. I've seen him a lot. So I, quite frankly, was a little surprised by a couple of the games he struggled in. I was able to see that he was just not relaxed and was feeling some pressure. We just kept encouraging him, kept working with him, kept showing him film. Just trying to get him to relax.

He just needed a couple of shots to go in and then start to feel like himself again. I think as good as he played in the Wake game, I think he's still just scratching the surface of how good he could be.

**Q. A lot of the stuff you say about Marble right off, is that stuff you can't coach? You either have it at his age or you don't?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: A lot of people attribute it to being a freshman versus an experienced player. I've been around long enough that the really good ones, the minute they get here, they don't rattle. Some will improve, most will improve, but when it comes to that aspect of it, it's kind of like I belong here. I'm a good player, and I'm going to make things happen. If I make a mistake, I'm not going to let it wear me down and I'll be back.

**Q. Looking at the impact Bryce has had on this team, would you think about recruiting another point guard with the scholarship you have left?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I have two scholarships left and what I will do with those scholarships is recruit the best possible player that

I can get. Now you look at our teams and we kind of need a big guy. That's true. But you improve your team with talent.

In a perfect world you'd say well, I need a 6'6" guy, and a 6'10" guy or a 6'3" guy and a 6'7" guy. But it doesn't always work that way. If there was a guard out that we really liked and thought he could help our team, we'd recruit him.

**Q. You're not looking for like a low post center or something. When you say a big guy, that encompasses a lot, doesn't it?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Well, I probably should say front court player. Because in a perfect world he'd be 6'10" or bigger. But one thing about me is I'm not going to bring a guy in who is 6'11" if he can't play. I'm not into recruiting projects. I don't think at the University of Iowa we should be recruiting projects. We need somebody that can help us.

Sometimes that person is 6'7" rather than 6'11". Well, what I'm going to bring in is somebody that can help us immediately.

**Q. When you look at the next few games, you're going to be playing teams that are really diverse. One team for sure that plays defense, doesn't play fast pace, another team that runs like crazy. How hard is that for you to establish your will on a team?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I've coached against Ben the last two years, so I know what it's like. He plays similarly to other team that's I've coached against over the years.

It's really no different than any other game in the sense that every team that you play has characteristics that define them. What we have to do is make our players know and understand who we're playing. Okay, what are they going to try to do to us defensively? What are they going to try to do to us offensively? What do we think will be effective against them?

So it's a one-game season, then you go to the next game. Some games will be up-and-down, and some games will be half court. Some games you'll be battling, and it will be in the 50's. Sometimes you'll be in the 90's. I prefer to be in the 90's. It doesn't always work that way.

Sometimes it could, but we don't shoot it that well. Sometimes they pack it in and you have longer possessions. So it's just a function of making sure that our players understand our

opponent, what their style is and then give them a game plan that will help them be effective that particular night.

**Q. Where is your team as far as taking that game plan on the floor? I know in the Long Beach State game you were frustrated that the two things you told them can't happen happened?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: We're getting better. We're not where we need to be. I think initially, okay, you look at opponents and say, all right. There are those components you just addressed. Then there is also these are the guys, these are the two.

First game, their two leading scorers were the leading scorers. It's a lot harder, sometimes, than you think. But you'd like to think that we could at least keep them under their averages, at or under their averages rather than above their averages. And that was sort of a consistent theme in the beginning. The good players were scoring.

But at the same time Long Beach was an offensive rebounding game. If we can keep them off the glass, we're going to beat them. You could really almost make the game plan that. Forget about anything else. If we don't let them offensive rebound, we're going to beat Long Beach, and we didn't. That's frustrating.

I do think that was a little bit more of a function of two things, inexperience and fatigue. But at the same time, hopefully we've learned from that.

I thought the Wake Forest game in terms of game planning and holding on to it and executing, it was substantially better. At the same time, you know, we had that seven-minute stretch or so where we came apart, and that's unfortunate.

Obviously, the positives are that the wheels didn't come completely off. We got it back together and we executed probably better than they did in the last five minutes. But we had to come back from the ten-point deficit at that point.

We're getting better. We're understanding the importance of it. Our game plans are fairly detailed -- not fairly detailed, very detailed.

When you have a young team, and forget about that, because it's new for everybody. We just do it differently than a lot of other people. We do it differently from the previous staff.

But in particular when a freshman is trying to learn the offense and defenses and everything's new and terminology's new, then you have to learn the other team's stuff, and the next team and the

next team's. It can be a little bit much sometimes. But to win a championship and to be really good, that's what you have to do. No question about it.

**Q. How valuable do you see this stretch being to your team now? I ask because you have six of the next seven here and then the one road game?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: To be honest with you, right now I'm looking at one game, Saturday. Can we get better? Can we be more consistent than we were in the last game? Then we'll game plan for Northern Iowa and everything after that.

But I don't look seven games down the road, because any number of things can happen between now and Saturday. We've had all kinds of injury issues that have changed a number of things that would have affected our game planning long-term.

So right now we're going to introduce some new things today. Things that quite honestly should have already been in, but they're not because it's been a little slower. But little by little we'll get everything in. We'll start to execute it better.

You saw that in the Wake game. Particularly with our set plays, we were able to score. We hadn't really been scoring out of those, so it gives us something else to run down the stretch, sets, motion. We've got some other things that we do, plus transition. We were a transition motion team almost exclusively the first three or four games.

And as you play teams that start to game plan for you and some teams that are really talented, you need more. You need more in your arsenal.

**Q. Your game plans you say might be different from other people. Is that an element of thing that you've picked up from the coaches you worked for?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: It's two things. It's a component of who I've worked for, but it's also a philosophy. There are coaches that they don't believe in doing it that way and they've had a lot of success.

So what I'm saying for me in my experience, who I've worked for over 30 years as a player and coach at a Division I level and seeing it done a number of different ways, this is how I firmly believe it has to be done.

You ask Don Nelson, the winningest coach in NBA history, and he doesn't think it's all that important what you do. It's what we do. But I want to work on what we do, and prepare you for what they do, and I think you have to do both. That's how I do it.

**Q. Did you do this from day one or has it evolved?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: No, no, no. We did it. But back then you didn't have as much tape to review. You know, you had one VHS tape, and you mailed it. And then they mailed it to the next team, and they mailed it to the next team.

Now you download. You've got a hundred tapes to watch, stats and all this stuff. You know, you never had that. So there is more access to it, and the staffs are bigger. In the old days we had one or two coaches and you were doing nine million different things. Now we've got people that can break it down and that helps our players get ready.

**Q. Were you overloaded with information?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I think that would be a debatable topic. I think it's a legitimate topic to discuss, and I will be honest with you and say that we've talked about that. Not so much can you overload them, but can you overload this team? Like whatever team you have at that particular moment, can they handle it based on basketball IQ and/or youth?

Sometimes you have an experienced team, but they don't have any basketball IQ. So now you're giving them all this information and they can't process it.

So my experience with this particular team is the problems that we've had have been more a function of youth versus basketball IQ. So I think in time they'll get it and in turn take full advantage of it.

**Q. Do you select certain plays like in football? Is it that detail oriented, or is it just something you present to them to take notes?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Well, we give them a scouting report that's pretty thick. We show a lot of film on the other team. We go through it, we go through it, and we go through it. So they'll know personnel tendencies, play calls, defenses that we can expect to see, how we're going to guard ball screens that particular game. How we're going to defend in transition that particular

game. Who are they going to go to at the end of the game? What are their late game plays versus what plays they're going to run early? Do they run a play right off the tip? All of those kinds of things, and they try to remember all of that. What are they going to run after timeouts? What are we going to do to them after timeouts?

In truth, you're never going to execute it to perfection. There are too many things happening. But the philosophy is if they can remember most of it, if they can remember it at crunch time, then it will impact the outcome of the game.

**Q. Iowa's kind of an unusual state in that all four teams at the Division I level play each other, but the bigger schools go to the smaller schools. Did you have anything like that with Syracuse or anything like that at Siena?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: No. I remember the teams that would come to play us at Siena were the teams that were bringing a player home. Stanford brought a player home. Georgia Tech's coming in this year. Syracuse brought a player home.

I forget Syracuse came in at the end of the year before I got there and sold the place out. They kept asking Jim Boeheim if he'd come back. He kept saying, yeah, it was great. I would see him and he would say, by the way, I'm not coming back.

So I keep telling those guys when they ask me the question, that's what I'm going to do. But I'm not coming. You didn't really expect them to come. It's just the way it is. You don't go there.

**Q. But here you go to Drake every year?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Right, so we'll go.

**Q. You're not going to wait until you go through the cycle before you come up with an opinion on whether you want to continue to do that?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I'd prefer to play 35 home games, so beyond that I'll play the schedule that's in front of me.

**Q. Did you get a chance to watch the Michigan State-Duke game at all last night?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: Little bit.



**Q. What do you think when you see teams of that high caliber? Anything go through your mind?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I really like Michigan State's team. I sort of watched them over the years more so from afar, two or three years ago we were in the Old Spice Classic with them. It looked like we were going to play them, so I started studying them. I sat courtside, because you can't live scout anymore except at a tournament situation.

I was amazed at how quickly they got the ball down the floor and they run really good offense, a lot of different things, counters. And I hadn't really paid much attention to Kalin Lucas at that time. He was young. He was a sophomore and really impressed me. I said that's the best point guard I've seen in a long time. Then he was the Big Ten Player of the Year that year, and I wasn't surprised. Really impressed with them.

I've played Duke a number of times and been there, so not really surprised at what they're doing. I know how hard it is to play there. I thought Michigan State handled themselves really well in terms of going on the road in that kind of environment and just kept coming. So it's obviously a team that I have great respect for.

**Q. When you see a game like that, does it reinforce your mind that man, we have a long ways to go, or, hey, we can continue?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: I never look at it that way, no. I feel like our team is progressing. I think any time you're in a situation where there is a team like Michigan State who is at the top, that's what you shoot for. They have been the standard.

There are others, Purdue and Ohio State, have been really good. We've been good over the years. So we have some work to do. There is no question about it. You know, it's not like I sit there and say, wow. It's like, okay, what do we have to do to beat Michigan State to get our team ready to beat them?

**Q. You talked a couple weeks ago about T.J. Sayre coming in and being that 15th guy on the roster. That you were impressed with him. What exactly were the intangibles?**

COACH MCCAFFERY: He knows how to play. When you have a walk-on, what ends up happening lots of times is they don't get practice reps. Then all of a sudden somebody goes down and they have to come in and be ready to go.

So they have to understand how to play, run the other team's offense, be a legitimate opponent in practice to help get us ready for a team like Wake Forest.

One of the reasons we kept him, of course, was his size. He's not only 6'6", or 6'7", but he's got some weight to him, he's 220. But he's been coached. He knows how to show on a ball screen. He knows how to get over and help. So when those guys defend our starters, we get something out of it.

Sometimes you have walk-ons, and it just happens this way, that they just don't give you any resistance in practice and you don't feel like you're making any progress. So that's what I meant when I talked about T.J.

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