

**February 25, 2013**



An interview with:

## **COACH FRAN McCAFFERY**

**Q. You talk about it being a process with this program, this team. What effect would it be making the NCAA tournament where you're heading with this thing?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that's the standard that everybody looks at. Your goal is to get in. Of course, it's then to advance once you're in there.

But there's just so much emphasis now put on the NCAA tournament. Obviously, I was fortunate to have played in it, coached in it. I recognize it's an incredible experience.

I have to admit, I never thought I'd see the day where the first week of January they're talking about the last four in and the first four out. It's incredible how senseless that is in January. But nonetheless, that's the world we live in.

It's an example of the pressure that everyone feels and everyone puts on themselves to be one of those teams that get in.

So when you're one of the teams that has an opportunity and you're in the conversation, it's great. You want to be one of the ones that gets in, not one of the ones that gets left out, and you want to do the things necessary to make that happen.

We're a team that clearly has been very close in that respect. So when you fall short, you lose a game you had a chance to win, it makes you feel that much worse.

But the question I think, the challenge before this team, is where do we go from here. That's to be determined.

**Q. How was the players' approach the last few days?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yesterday we didn't practice. It was a mandatory day off. A

number of them were in working out on their own, which they do frequently. You've heard me say that. That's a good thing.

After the game, one of the things that happened as a result of the change of the game was that we couldn't get out right after the game, we had to wait. We went back to the hotel, we ate, then we waited for the plane to come and get us, then we went home.

The mood was as you would have expected: pretty quiet. We broke the tape down right there. We kept our setup. I did my TV show there. We got a lot of work done. Then we just got on the plane and went home.

You kind of let them just deal with it on their own. You don't belabor it. I challenged them after the game. I wasn't happy. The interesting thing was, and this happens a lot, this is why I try to temper what I say after the game, even if I'm upset. My perception of what happened in the game was a lot different after I watched the game than it was when the game ended.

You could see the stats, we shot 28%, they shot 62%. That's not a good formula to hold onto a lead. I was upset with what I thought was collective tentative play offensively. We were more tentative than we should have been.

But the reason we had so much pressure on us offensively was because our defense was so bad. That was like one of our performances last year when we were non-existent at the defensive end of the floor. I think that's the disappointing thing.

You're going to have games where you don't shoot it well. It was lucky we had a 16-point lead the way we were playing defense in the second half. Guys were just going by us, throwing it in the post, turning it into scoring. We were not as effective as we have been. That's clearly been one of our strengths. I don't think there's any question about that.

That's one of the things we need to

address today when we broke the film down and show it to them. They haven't seen it yet. They'll see that it was actually as much our defense as much as the lack of offense.

**Q. What other observations did you make when you broke down the tape?**

COACH McCAFFERY: There really weren't many other ones than what was obvious. I mean, our execution was below average. We made some poor decisions on the break. We were much better on the break in the first half than we were in the second half clearly.

We mixed both man and zone in the second half, neither one with any level of effectiveness. It's one of the reasons we went back to zone on the last possession. We wanted to keep them out. If they were going to beat us, they were going to beat us over the top because we had been getting broken down, we felt like we could do that.

**Q. Adam never really got going. What is his frame of mind right now?**

COACH McCAFFERY: You can tell that he's really trying to affect the game. That's one of the reasons he was in foul trouble, played nine minutes. He's going to be physical, aggressive.

I think one of the impressive things about him was we put him back in the end for defense, give us a bigger body than Zach. We trapped a ball screen, he was fabulous in that situation, really caused a problem for them.

I think what you'll see with him is a guy that's going to keep working. He's got to figure out how to be physical without using his hands 'cause that's what's getting him into trouble in terms of foul trouble.

**Q. He's averaging five rebounds in less than 16 minutes.**

COACH McCAFFERY: You've heard me say many times, if I played him a ton of minutes and he stayed out of foul trouble, he would lead the league in rebounding. I think he's put a lot of pressure on himself to be a scorer. He's going to affect his game with his defense, rebound and running more than anything else.

**Q. When you say 'where do we go from here,' is that a concern of yours going into the next ballgame? How will you deal with that with the players?**

COACH McCAFFERY: It's never a concern. It's just my job. I'm not concerned about it. I mean, you take where you are at any given point in time and you coach them up and you figure out what do we have to do to get ready to play Purdue. What do we have to do to get ready to play Indiana. You go to the next game. Who is playing well, who is struggling. Who needs a pat on the back and who needs a kick in the tail. You show them the clips. You make teaching points.

You get shots up because we're struggling shooting the ball. That's what you do. You just try to prepare them to the best of our abilities to play the best that they can possibly play Wednesday night against Purdue. No more, no less.

**Q. How has Purdue evolved over the last month?**

COACH McCAFFERY: It's interesting. We tend to get carried away sometimes with winning streaks and losing streaks. It's purely a function of who you're playing.

They may have had a game or two where they weren't expecting a defeat or something along those lines. But they lost at Northwestern. A lot of teams lose at Northwestern. Indiana beat them twice. They're pretty much beating everybody. So I don't think that's any reason to look at Purdue any differently.

I think you look at them the way I do. Number one, they're going to guard you. Number two, they're going to rebound. I think they pride themselves on being the tougher team any time they take the floor. Doesn't mean they're going to win them all but they're going to compete in a way that's going to challenge our team and any team that plays them. That's a credit to their players and their coaching staff. I think Matt has made sure that's that team's identity.

We have to make sure that we're able to compete at that level, play a little bit better than we have been playing, in particular at the offensive end of the floor.

**Q. Do you think people need to be more patient with Adam at the offensive end?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think if you look at it intelligently, you can never really look at what a guy does offensively in high school. You can to a certain extent. He's scoring baskets last year in high school against guys that were 6'1". He was an effective score in the AAU circuit against guys

6'7", 6'11". But nobody's scouting you.

Now there's better athletes, bigger athletes, and the sophistication of the scouting at this level is second only to the NBA.

He's got to now figure out what are teams doing to me and how can I be an effective member of this team on the offensive end of the floor even without scoring. Obviously, that's with his passing, that's with his screening.

I think what you'll find is he's been much better at passing and screening. He's going to get more slip opportunities, more opportunities where he gets the ball with an angle to the rim to score as opposed to score over somebody. He's had a hard time scoring over people at this level. He didn't have that problem last year. Now he's got to work on that, his release point. How do you get an angle? How do you get easy buckets, offensive rebound put-backs in transition?

The thing you've noticed about him is he does not back down. He's not soft. He just keeps coming, keeps battling, keeps believing in himself. I think that's the thing that's been impressive to me.

**Q. His numbers compare favorably to freshmen centers at Iowa. Do you think your expectations were fair to him coming into this year?**

COACH McCAFFERY: He was a top-30 player. I think people look at that and immediately figure that he's going to be getting us more baskets. But that was never really who he was. He was a guy that could move his feet. He was a guy that was going to be physical and tough. He was going to be able to rebound and outlet the ball, run and play in the transition game, move his feet on ball screens defensively and affect the game that way. He could pass. He could put on the deck a little bit. He's got a pretty complete skill set that way.

I think once he comes to grips with all of that and doesn't put incredible pressure on himself to have to be a scorer, then I think what you're going to see is a guy that really is effective.

If you think about it, when he's on the floor, he's been effective, he really has been. His minutes have been limited by his foul trouble. Now, that's going to come with experience.

**Q. Mike Gesell rolled his ankle early in the second half. Did that affect the way you played? How is his health?**

COACH McCAFFERY: It's bothering him a little bit. We'll see how he does today. That's

always going to impact. An injury that takes place during a game, you never really know. Sometimes you can play through it and it doesn't really hurt you till after the game.

It seemed to affect him a little bit to me. It seemed to get him just a little bit sideways.

**Q. When you look back at all those close losses, has there been one thing that's been consistently missing or...**

COACH McCAFFERY: We've tried pretty much everything. We've tried different players. We've gone inside. We've run clear-outs, motions, sets.

The thing about our team is we've got different players on given days that play better than on other days. So sometimes we go to a different lineup at the end of the game than the game before. Usually it's the same three or four guys. For us it's obviously going to be Marble and White in particular. The other guys, I'd say probably Mike Gesell, would be in that group. But the rest of the guys, it's been Eric May, Woody, Melsahn, Clemmons, so many different combinations. It's been Gabe Olaseni a couple times. Last time we played Purdue, he was on the floor late.

That is going to take a little bit of time to figure out and so forth. But when it comes down to it, we're getting good shot opportunities by good players. I have confidence in particular with Dev. He just made two really tough shots when we were struggling. So we go to him again and he charges. It's unfortunate.

We wouldn't have been in that situation if he hadn't made those two big shots prior to that. Dev let us down. No, he didn't. The only reason we were in that position was because of him. He didn't come through on this particular possession.

I go back to the Purdue game the last time. The two drives he made were terrific plays. The ball didn't go in. Normally it does for him.

I don't panic, start trying to come up with some new dramatic new offense that is going to solve what we're doing. I put the ball in the hands of my best players, set them up the best we can, make sure we get a shot.

The only time that we didn't was the one turnover he had in the Minnesota game. Other than that we got shots. Even then we had the lead. It was unfortunate we didn't get another shot to get a chance to go up four.

We've gotten good shots. You go back and you say look at the shot that Aaron White made on Saturday. They go up three. He just ties the game, raises up and drills it.

So we've got guys that are playing with a great deal of courage. It's just unfortunate that we're not able to eke out a couple closer victories, but we've also won some close games.

**Q. Ten of your 14 Big Ten games have been decided by single digits. In the last two minutes of the games, shooting percentages for the other teams have been better than yours. Do you see any common factors? Personnel groupings?**

COACH McCAFFERY: No. The free-throw shooting is unfortunate. We've got good free throw shooters out there. Our free-throw shooting numbers are good. We have the right guy shooting the ball.

If you had a really bad free throw shooter you were going to, he gets fouled, misses a free throw, you would question it. We got the right guys shooting the ball late. I don't think there's anything there.

**Q. Seems like with Adam, to say he's been intimidated would not be fair. Seems like when he rebounds, he's not in awe of his surroundings or intimidated.**

COACH McCAFFERY: No, and he doesn't seem to be pressing either to me. He just seems to be, again, a little bit consumed with feeling like he has to score for our team.

But for the most part I think he's been a team player, trying to fit in the best he can. I think the kid's got great potential. He's got terrific character. I've been thrilled with him.

**Q. Playing three freshmen as many minutes as they're getting, how does that translate where you're headed with this program?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I think it's absolutely critical. You need experience. It's great if you have a one-and-done guy who's so good that you just go to him and ride him.

But the more guys you have that have been through the wars in this league, have been able to be in a position where they made a mistake, missed a shot, they're not afraid to come down, take that shot and make it, that's just part of it.

Mike in particular has really been impressive in that regard. We were dead in the water down at Purdue. He just catches fire in the second half on the road. That's a pretty big stage. He really put us on his back and that enabled Aaron White to make two huge shots late that gave us the lead. That's the kind of time we have. Basabe makes the two big dunks late. But it was a freshman that got us over the hump. Clemmons has done that a few times. Woodbury I thought a number of cases defensively and rebounding more so than his scoring. You look at the second half of the Minnesota game, he struggled in the first half, he was right in the middle of that run when we really started to pull away from them with the big-time dunk. It's going to bode well from those guys moving forward.

**Q. What kind of challenges does A.J. present?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Anytime you have a 7-footer who can score, that's going to be something you got to deal with. He's got a great pair of hands. Another thing he does is block shots. He kind of hangs around the basket, gobbles up drivers, blocks, contests your shots in and around the basket by your post players. He affects the game at both ends of the floor.

We've got to make sure that we recognize that and deal with him accordingly.

Thank you.

### **FastScripts by ASAP Sports**