

January 16, 2014



An interview with:

COACH McCAFFERY

Q. Coach, the rest of the season is sold out. Talk about the importance of protecting home court and being in the environment how that will help?

COACH McCAFFERY: The environment will definitely help. I think the crowds have been great all year long. The fact that the last seven are all sold out is I think a testament to our guys and how they've played and how much they enjoy watching them play. I think it's safe to say when you look at the league it's as balanced as it's ever been. You look at the scores so you have to be ready every night, and to have that kind of atmosphere is clearly going to be very helpful.

Q. When it comes to Devyn Marble, you look at the numbers, and it's not like it's a huge leap from where he has been in the past. But when you watch him, it seems like he's such a better player than he's ever been. I wonder what you're seeing out of him this year?

COACH McCAFFERY: You're seeing a guy who is clearly very comfortable in terms of how we use him. He's got supreme confidence right now. His teammates have confidence in him. I have confidence in him. I always did. We just kind of turn him loose and we give him the ball and move him off the ball. We post him up and try to give him space when we can.

But he can play against the zone; he can play against the press; he can play against man. He makes plays for other people. He's not a selfish guy. But if he needs to be the guy, he can be. So I'm just really excited for him in terms of how his game has evolved.

Q. Talk about the value of home court and how it's going to be full and you are going to have a home court advantage. How as a coach does that fit in?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know if you can do that. We're just really excited that it's going to be like that. I don't think there is any question we'd all agree that you're going to play better in that atmosphere. But in this league you're going to play really good teams with really good players and really good coaches. You know, we just did it. We're not the only team that did it, and we're not going to be the only team that does it. Other teams are doing the same thing.

We have experienced teams that are used to playing in that environment regularly. It's not that anybody's going to rattle as much. There is a greater degree of comfortability to the home team, especially offensively.

Q. Did this all happen faster than you expected (larger crowds)?

COACH McCAFFERY: I felt like from the beginning the fans were really engaged. We needed more, we wanted more, but they were excited and slowly they were coming back and wanted to come back and wanted to be here and wanted to be a participant in what's going on. I think it's been across the board, students and our season ticket holders. Our season ticket base has gone up. People come up to me all the time, "I just bought season tickets for the first time in a long time. I used to be a season ticket holder and I went away and now I'm coming back." When that happens regularly, you can find of feel it.

Again, I'm excited about it, but I'm happy for the guys because if they didn't do what they needed to do, it wouldn't happen. They've, I think really made it so that people want to come back and watch this team play.

Q. How big was Oglesby's contribution against Ohio State?

COACH McCAFFERY: Huge. But for him, I'm not surprised. I mean, he was -- I was not exaggerating, before the season he was playing as well as anybody we had. Overseas, those six games, he was beyond spectacular. It's like wow, it sounds like you're just kind of saying that, but he was terrific. He breaks his foot and he comes back. You don't know where he's going to be. He hits four threes in his first game, but it's against a team that we should beat.

You can see it now, he's getting in shape, he's getting comfortable, but he's a junior. He defends. I say it over and over, he's not a mistake guy. He's going to shoot threes. He's going to back cut and make a lay-up. His closeouts in the zone were incredible. His awareness of where to go, where to be, and how quickly he had to get there... he takes advantage of his length and his size at his position. He's going to be a valuable part of our team.

Q. Do you have any concerns about how your team might handle success now that there is a lot of national publicity?

COACH McCAFFERY: No. I think as we move forward, if we lose, it's going to be because we lose to a good team. It's not going to be because of that.

Q. Coach, the 3-point shooting against Northwestern at 14, and Ohio State you had four or five three-pointers at the end that really kept you guys in it. How big is that going to be now that we get close to Michigan State?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think 3-point shooting has revolutionized the game. It's changed everything. You could almost look at the stats and figure out, okay, that's how the game went. It's hard to win if you're making one or two. It is. Because you play teams in this league, know, I just watched a game where one team made nine, one team made 11. That changes everything.

We addressed that issue with what we thought was the team that we put together that has multiple 3-point shooters, and we had 3-point shots made and Zach didn't make any. In the beginning it was Zach's going to make a bunch, and somebody else won't, but I think that's what we need and that's what we have.

Q. What do you think of Minnesota from what you've seen?

COACH McCAFFERY: I really like their team. When you're not playing them you'll see them hit somebody else or see a box score or read an article or something like that and you get a sense of what you think they're doing. You couple that with what you remember from last year, obviously, they have a new coach and they play completely differently. Their style is completely different.

They're going to press more zone, more chain defenses, more trap more, they're going to shoot a ton of threes. But I think what they've done is they'll take the players they had. They added some guys, and they've got a real solid core unit of talented personnel. They're quick and they have a good blend of experience and some new guys, so they'll be a major factor in this league.

Q. You have three 1,000-point scorers on this team. None of them were highly recruited coming out of high school. This is the fifth time it's been done in school history, but these guys came and the program has done pretty well. Can you talk about what they've accomplished and how important they've been in this rebuilding process?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think the thing that's been impressive is they weren't afraid to come under the circumstances under which they came, which is if this thing is going to be turned, we're going to be the ones who do it. We're not going to be on the backs of somebody else and we're not going to sustain something that's already there, and that takes a lot of courage and a lot of confidence in yourself. That's what I love about those guys.

Zach's not a 1,000-point scorer, but he's close. He'll end up being close. So you put him into the mix, and those guys just wanted to be here. They wanted an opportunity to play in the Big Ten in a great environment with an impressive fan base. The fact that they're enjoying more success and getting more notoriety and attention is terrific. I mean, that's what I've told them what happened and I'm glad it did.

Q. You say you've always had success, but now it's kind of a validation of Sunday's win. What is it about the mental make-up of your team that no matter what happens, they don't seem to be fazed or go too high or too low?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it's the nature of the guys we have. But I also think it's a function of experience. We have more experience than we've ever had before. So I think they're better equipped to deal with those kinds of things, and I think that's what you're seeing.

Q. Two years ago with Matt (Gatens) here he went from the type of player that toward the end of the season he was just phenomenal. When you look at how Marble is progressing, do you think that's possible for him too?

COACH McCAFFERY: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I think you're seeing it. He's done it. But I also think you're seeing he's playing a lot more minutes of Big Ten play. I'm playing him a lot more. Got to be careful with that, but I think that helps. I kept them out of some games where they were lopsided scores and didn't want to get him hurt. Just felt no need to keep him in there.

But when you have a guy that's playing like he's playing and playing as comfortably as he is, I think the more minutes you give him, the better it is. He's just out there feeling like he can do whatever we need him to do in that particular situation. If it's a drive, if it's a pull-up, if it's nothing at all. Let's run some clock.

But he affects the game; he rebounds; he gets steals. He had a couple huge steals and a couple deflections late in that game that were winning plays. He's a winning player.

Q. You want to take what the schedule gives you. But coming off a win at Ohio State and playing Minnesota, is this a situation where you'd rather take a few days off and then get back at it or is it good to have a week off and get back at it?

COACH McCAFFERY: I really don't think it matters. I think what you do is if you're right back at it, you go right back at it, you get ready and you play and you take advantage of that. If you have some time off you rest some guys that are a little banged up. You get some shots up and rest their minds and their bodies a little bit and get them ready to play because we're not going to have this again.

Q. The last couple games, obviously supported the team, is that the Basabe we'll see the rest of the way?

COACH McCAFFERY: It certainly appears that way. He's had a focus. I go back to, again, I talked about Oglesby playing in August, Basabe was really dominant in that stretch. He had some really good games early, but I was sort of expecting this all year long. Again, sometimes his minutes were a little bit less because we were ahead. But the way he has been playing, the way he played down the stretch in that game with blocking shots and rebounding and making his free throws, a huge tip-in. I think what you're seeing is a guy who is really comfortable right now and excited to be playing the way he's playing. He wants to compete at that level. He wants to play beyond college. I think you're seeing a different level of maturity with his entire approach.

If he's playing like that we're a better team, no question about it.

Q. White's performance is very consistent...

COACH McCAFFERY: Very consistent. I don't think you're going to see much change there. He's going to do what he does. You don't think of him as a three-point shooter, and he makes a huge three in the game because he's not afraid to shoot threes late, makes them. He's always done that. He's going to rebound. He's also going to make steals and get involved in transition opportunities. He's not a mistake guy either.

Q. Your first three years you had strong leadership each and every year from a senior, whether it was Jarryd Cole, Matt Gatens, or Eric May. This year they seem to be maybe different ways, is that fair or?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, Dev leads just by how he goes about his business. He's not a big talker. There are times I wish he would say more because he's incredibly cerebral a player. You look at a talented athlete and sometimes you stereotype him. He's a thinking-man's player, and I think he's got more to share. But I think in some ways he's constantly focused on what he's supposed to be doing, and where he's supposed to be going and things of that nature. And White has become more of a vocal guy.

Basabe and McCabe are more workman like players. Neither of them do a lot of talking

either. They don't make a lot of mistakes either. Melsahn used to make a lot more. He doesn't do that anymore. I think you're seeing him effect the game defensively more than he ever has. He always did rebounding and shot blocking, but now he's doing it by guarding people that are maybe a little more versatile than we would have been comfortable with him guarding a year and a half ago.

So those guys have all come together, I think, in their own way and collectively have led very well.

Q. Do you see yourself kind of tightening your rotation a little bit now?

COACH McCAFFERY: It's possible. I don't want to. It's not going to be by design. It will be a game-by-game thing. With the way Josh played the other day, it precluded Clemmons from coming back in. That happened. But we'll see...

Q. Can you talk about Uthoff being more aggressive, and baseline move he had at Ohio State. Will that help him down the road?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah. I always kind of felt like he was going to be that guy. I think that type of game in that type of situation clearly defines that for all of us. But I'm encouraging him to attack more, shoot more and things of that nature.

He is who he is. He's just not a high-volume guy in that sense. He wants to make plays. He's going to attack the rim; he'll shoot it when he's open. I do think if he is more aggressive, we'll be better for it, you know? I've encouraged him to do that.

I think you're right that could be a step in terms of that being the right direction for him.

Q. The Gophers are one of the best rebounding teams in the league if not in the country. They seem to have adjusted their preference to more perimeter based three-point shooting but still pretty aggressive on the perimeter. Do you think that's worked well for them this year or is it still a work in progress?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it's worked well, and I think that's how they're going to play. They're going to be quick. They're going to shoot threes and they're going to press. The big guys for them have been very effective. Eliason, Osenieks, Joey King, those guys have been really good. Because Osenieks and King can make threes, which stretches the defense even more. And

Eliason has been impressive to me. His ability to run the floor and be mobile and still be big and effect the game with his shot blocking and scoring the ball. Walker was hurt and now he's in the best shape of his life.

Clearly, when you look at the bodies of those guys, that is an emphasis, and you're seeing it. I don't think there's going to be a change. I think that's how they're going to play.

Q. How difficult is Andre Hollins. He seems to be one of the better guards in the country year-in and year-out.

COACH McCAFFERY: He's excellent because he can get his own or he can shoot off the catch or shoot off the screen. He can score in bunches But I think Mathieu has made a big difference in taking pressure off both the Hollins and getting in the ball. Those two guys are really playing well. I think a lot of the reason is because of Mathieu. He's taken the major responsibilities away from them in terms of handling the ball and go score it.

Q. What do you say to someone like Zach as far as being able to encourage him after the game the other day?

COACH McCAFFERY: I didn't say anything to him. I want him to do the exact same thing the next game that he did. I think in all honesty he may be rushing a little bit. I may talk to him about that, but I thought his shots were good. I thought he made a couple of them. He didn't. He still was really good on the defensive end, and he makes the great pass to Josh on the back cut. He's a very effective player even if he's not making threes, but I think he will.

Q. He had four rebounds and three assists, maybe one turnover.

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, the other thing is defensively... when they started trying to work the baseline among cutters back there, he's so experienced. He knew when to come over. He knew when to stay on the other side and just always in the right place. If you're staring at the ball in the zone and guys are cutting behind you, you better know what's going on. That's why he was in there in that stretch, and he made a difference defensively.

The zone was effective. It's effective because you have guys that know what to do and they know how to talk and communicate, and they know when to fight and post and when to get out to the shooter. That's when you're effective.

Q. Do you set a priority this week on rest knowing next week you have three games in seven days?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yes, we do. I think we practiced well, but we haven't killed them.

Q. I know there hasn't been as much about it this year as there was a year ago, but playing again on the anniversary of Chris Street's death, are you planning a tribute like having the jersey on the bench on Sunday?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, we're not planning on doing that, but we'll be thinking about him.

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