

**February 21, 2014**



An interview with:

## **COACH McCAFFERY**

**Q. So you guys playing tomorrow or is it going to be pushed back?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think we're playing.

**Q. How did you guys manage this stretch, you know, it's one game in 14 days, in terms of practice?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, there are some rules that enter into it with regard to when you can practice, so we still took Wednesday off by rule. So Tuesday we had a shootaround and then sat in the hotel and then flew back. Wednesday we took off. Went hard yesterday, practiced today. It's just one of those things. You just deal with it. It's unique but can't worry about it.

**Q. Would you say that the way your team is built with the depth you have, you can maybe sustain the challenge ahead more than some teams can?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, I think depth is going to help you through a long, grueling season. We're down near the end. Theoretically, it would help. I think you get to this time of year, and guys would rather play games than practice anyway. So if you play three games in a week, you know, realistically the travel aspect of it is more tiresome than the game itself.

**Q. You've had a lot of travel issues this year, from the Bahamas to Michigan?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, it's been a unique year in that sense. We've spent so much time and we have the resources to put money behind it to try to minimize those situations. We all do in this league; we all do at this level. We're

taking charter planes and staying in nice places and eating well. Obviously, the theory being over the course of a long season, it's going to be very helpful to you. I think there is no question it has been. You want to keep playing, if you can. You want to get into the tournament and you want to keep playing.

**Q. Status quo as far as your rotation, because of all the quick games you're going to be having? Have you thought about changing the way you substitute or anything?**

COACH McCAFFERY: No, I think everything will be the same. We'll still sub a lot, and throughout the course of the game, certain players are playing really well or not playing as well, they'll play more or less depending, but that's no different.

**Q. The fact that you're willing to move that game, on the surface it gives a day of rest after all those games.**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, I just think that was a really professional thing, and I really appreciate that by the administration. Matt's (Painter) willingness to play the game on Sunday, under the circumstances. I think we all appreciate their professionalism there.

**Q. How long was it discussed to potentially play at Bankers Life and then did this February 27th date automatically come up as the next best thing?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I think our hope was to stay and play it either in Bloomington or Indianapolis the next day if they could get it fixed. But my first conversation with Fred Glass, he was adamant, look, it's not going to be ready for us to play here. So then we checked the schedule at Bankers Life and they had an open day, but my understanding is that it is way more complicated than you think. It's not, well, everybody go over

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there. It doesn't quite work that way, I guess. I'm not in that industry.

I don't want to critique anybody in an area I don't know anything about. But I guess maybe if we had more time, couple extra days, but not in less than 24 hours, would we be able to do that. So best thing to do was fly home, regroup, get reasonable people together to do the best we can in a different situation, and I think that's what we did. So I was really impressed by our league, by both administrations, by Purdue. And like I said, we'll just go play the games when they're scheduled now.

**Q. Are you concerned at all, this is only your second game in 14 days and you're playing a Wisconsin team that's playing very well? Is that a concern?**

COACH McCAFFERY: No, it really isn't. We respect how they're playing. They're playing really well. We've been playing well when we've played. We've had a little more time off, but I think both teams are going to play hard tomorrow. It's that simple.

**Q. Has it allowed your team to get a little bit of rest here? Guys were dinged up a little bit.**

COACH McCAFFERY: Pete and Clemmons in particular. It helped them, so that's always good.

**Q. With the travel, will you be going directly to Indiana from Minnesota?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yes.

**Q. How challenging was it being able to assemble that whole process without having to fly home first?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't think it was that difficult. Obviously, you're missing an extra day of class. That was a concern across the board. But I think we're under the limit, so we're okay.

**Q. Will Indiana reimburse you for travel costs?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know. That's not my area. Ask somebody else that one.

**Q. What is it about Wisconsin, I'm sure you watch a lot of games, when they're struggling and playing well, what is the difference?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well the simple answer is they weren't making shots, now they're making shots. It's obviously more complicated than that. I think Kaminsky has stepped his game up, Kaminsky, Dekker and Gasser are really playing well. That said, Brust is still their leading scorer, Nigel Hayes has really, I think amped up his game, particularly at the offensive end.

So they have so many weapons, whether it be from the three-point line or in the post. They've just got different ways that they can score and they've got experience. They don't make a ton of mistakes.

**Q. Does this magnify your one-game-at-a-time approach? It seems like it would.**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, yeah. I don't see how you'd ever do anything else in this league. If you start looking down the road, you're just going to get beat. You can't. Everybody's too good.

**Q. It's such an unusual situation having consecutive weeks off in February, which there is a reason why nobody schedules this way. Would you do anything different from a practice perspective when you got home to adjust or is it just we do what we do?**

COACH McCAFFERY: No, we had to give them Wednesday off and then we just practiced yesterday. We went hard yesterday. Because we didn't do a lot on Tuesday, and we didn't practice Wednesday. The guys came in and lifted on their own on Wednesday, which I think was good. Because that way we could get up and running on Thursday.

**Q. Looking at Brust from the outside, I know he's banged up, but what kind of challenges does he present? He wasn't very good in the first half against you last time, but then in the second half.**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I think that is the thing that makes him unique. He can go 0 for 7 and then make the game winner. Not everybody can do that. Normally he's fairly consistent with his shooting and his play, you know, a very consistent guy that produces and helps his team win. But his ability to make the dagger three's has been impressive over the years. Not everybody can do that.

**Q. You've got both Devyn and Aaron, Devyn's played a little over 31 minutes a game in Big Ten play, and Aaron is under 31 minutes. Is that a plus or luxury that they should still have legs left at this part of the season because of your depth?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think those guys really do a good job taking care of their bodies. We really monitor how hard we push them in practice. Obviously, the idea is to get them to where they need to be. If either of them were ever under the weather, I would give them time. I trust their professionalism, so I'm hopeful they've got plenty of legs left.

**Q. From a logistical standpoint, even now that the game is cancelled on Tuesday, are you still mandated to give the guys the day off Wednesday?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, uh-huh. Now there are various waiver procedures, but then it becomes more complicated with regard to how many games you have the next week and then the next week. So we've got our guys working that out to the point where we'll be able to kind of get done what we need to get done within the rules.

**Q. I'm curious, the Indiana scouting report, that will stay pretty much the same? I assumed you watch the two games they play and tweak it a little bit?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, and it's a little bit unique in the sense that we haven't played them. We only play them once. It would be different if it was the second time around, that type of thing. But even Wisconsin is a lot different. We played them so long ago and they're so different now. Yeah, we'll tweak it a little bit to see what they do in these next two.

**Q. Do you find it kind of interesting in a series like yours with Wisconsin, you're third and fourth in the league, really important games have been completely overshadowed by an act of God?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, to be honest with you, I don't really look at it like that. To me the importance and impact of this game hasn't changed regardless of what happened on Tuesday. Whether we played, didn't play, won, lost, it's a big game.

**Q. How are you are have your players kind of handled all this stuff? Have they talked to you about anything or acted differently?**

COACH McCAFFERY: No. They don't -- you know, we never make a big deal about it. They don't make a big deal about it. It's on to the next. Big win, on to the next. Tough loss, on to the next. You think about when we started practicing and how much we still have to go, you know, if you overanalyze or overreact, it's going to be a nightmare season for them. My job is to keep them on an even keel and get them prepared and get them ready, and that's what we do.

We ignore the travel issues. If we made a big deal about coming back from the Bahamas -- we lose to Notre Dame. Plain and simple. Doesn't mean you're going to win them all doing it that way, but you're just going to approach the game with the professionalism that's necessary to have a chance to win.

**Q. You kind of took a caller to task last night that was kind of critical of Zach?**

COACH McCAFFERY: You have nothing better to do than listen to my radio show? (said jokingly)

**Q. Yeah, well, we haven't covered a game. My question though is do you think people understand the value he has on this team?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Apparently he didn't.

**Q. Well, he didn't, no. But the value, he's one of the guys that's been here since the start.**

COACH McCAFFERY: The guy's going to score 900 points and get 500 rebounds and he's trying to rip the kid on my radio show. That's not going to happen, not on my show. I don't care if the guy -- I was this close to saying, you know what? Don't preface what you're getting ready to say by saying I'm a big Hawk fan. No, you're not. No, you're not. Go root for somebody else. I don't have time for that guy.

**Q. But his value, here's a guy who started earlier in his career, now he's coming off the bench. A lot of people wouldn't play through that, but he seems to be handling it.**

COACH McCAFFERY: He's been a terrific player for us for four years, a great teammate, tremendous captain. He has won games for us. I use him in so many different ways. But he clearly is underappreciated in many ways. Not you guys. You guys see it. But think back to the Minnesota game. They're pressing us all over the place. Who brought the ball up? He did, as much as everybody else on our team.

And we had no problems with the press, because McCabe got the ball on the floor, threw it over, drove it, kicked it, whatever it took. You think back to the Xavier game, he's making all the threes when we're down 15 or 17, he's making all the threes. People forget about that.

So you have to appreciate what a guy brings to the table every day. He comes with it. He gives me everything he's got every day with tremendous attitude and support of all of his teammates. You're not going to bad mouth him, not in front of me.