

November 17, 2011



Final Score:

Iowa – 88
Northern Illinois – 55

An Interview With:

FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. Is that why Josh has the green light?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. You know, if you remember, I had been talking about how he had been shooting the basketball from the start of practice, consistently. And he's been between 55 and 60 percent collectively over that period of time.

I mean, I have seen very few shooters that shoot the ball like he does in 29 years, and when you have them like that, what they have to know is that I have every bit as much confidence in him as he has in himself, and he can shoot it whenever he wants to, early in the shot clock, at the end of the shot clock, off one pass, in transition, doesn't matter. And I'm a firm believer that a shooter has to have that type of green light to be the kind of player that they can be, because the thing about him is once he makes a few, they start flying at him, they start running at him, he can make a play off the dribble. He is not a guy that just moves it on, has to run around and get it back again. He's got great vision, got the ability to put it on the floor, he's got size, and I mean, he is a weapon every time he catches the ball.

Q. You had 26 assists tonight. How pleased were you to see that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think 26 assists on 33 baskets, that's really impressive. And I think that's the thing as you look at the stats that impresses me the most, that's it.

Q. Talk about 13 of 21. You said this team would be a better shooting team.

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, I did, and that was something we felt like we had to address, and not only in terms of recruiting but in terms of the guys we had and working with them, and I think the new facility has been helpful. We've got two shooting guns, guys that get in there all the time and committed themselves from last year until now to improving in that area. You guys saw our games last year. That was not a strength of ours, it just wasn't. We played hard, we battled, but we're making shots now. We've got multiple people making shots, which makes us that much harder to guard.

Q. You had a couple of players last year that were kind of up and down, inconsistent, May and McCabe, and they seem to have been really consistent through the first couple of games.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you sort of felt with Zach it was more a function of his youth. He was a freshman, I was playing him at multiple positions, he's trying to remember everything. He's going against some really quick three men in our league.

You know, Eric, I really think he was on his way to having a great year. He started terrific for us when Matt got hurt, but he had that injury right before the Ohio State game. He was never really the same after that, and I think that affected him. He's in phenomenal shape. Those two guys, I mean, when they let it go, you feel like it's going in.

Q. Are you most pleased that you played a lot of guys a lot of minutes, but the guys who didn't start kept the level of play up pretty high and you played pretty consistently?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We did, and I think that's the kind of team we have, and that's the kind of team you have to have if you're going to win, if

you're going to win on the road, if you're going to win close games. One of the things I said a minute ago on TV was you have to have various people that are scoring. You can't put so much pressure on two people or three people every night to have to score, and if they don't score, we can't win. And to be honest with you, that's kind of where we were last year. It was Cartwright, Gatens and Basabe. If any one of those guys had an off night or if two of them had an off night, it was going to be hard to win.

Now they can be rested a little bit more, and they can have a subpar game, not shoot as much. Aaron White comes in, he can go for 20, Mel can get eight like he did tonight, and I think that's the beauty of this team. I think more importantly is you have individuals that are accepting of that because it's great as a coach and it's great to watch as a fan, but if you have any level of selfishness when it comes to that kind of thing, then you've got more problems, and we don't have any of that right now.

Q. What was going on with Archie there in the second half because it looked like the first half he was ineffective and early on in the second half.

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, he's an interesting person. When I got here, he had -- I don't want to say given up, but he had a big time defeatist attitude in terms of where he was and how he viewed himself and how he thought we viewed him. Well, I viewed him with a clean slate, show me what you've got. And in the beginning he was bad. And I challenged him very definitely, and he gave us, as you saw, some quality performances.

He was not consistent last year, so the challenge for him this year is to be more consistent. The only way he's going to be more consistent is if that energy level you saw in the second half is always there. If he's jogging up and down and he's on the side of his man and he's hugging the weak side, he's of no use to us, and that's what he did in the first half, and I took him out and I talked to him about it, and the interesting thing with him is I still think there's more in the tank. He's got some stuff in this game. He's got a feel for how to play, he's got length, he's got quickness, and he understands where to go, where to be, and he can score. He's not a shooter but he can still score and he can pass and he's a willing passer. So for this team, he's a very valuable asset.

Q. Sunday the competition ramps up with Creighton. Do you feel like that is kind of the next stepping-stone to see where your team is?

FRAN McCAFFERY: No question. Not only is it a step up, it's not here. It's not in their place, either, but there will be fans from both programs. The thing that I've been really impressed with about Mac's team is they're kind of the same way that we've just been talking. They share the ball. They have various guys that can make shots. They made 14 threes in their first game. Five different guys made a three. They've got the best player in that league in Doug McDermott. I mean, he had 27 at UAB. That's pretty impressive. So they've got a lot of weapons, and they've got four transfers that are older guys, and they've got some experienced guards.

So they're not going to panic. They're not going to be in a situation where in any way, shape or form they're nervous. They're just going to play their game and we're going to have to beat that team. They are not going to beat themselves.

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