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An Interview With:

FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. Coach, a good start to the game, but you backed up a good start to the second half, give you just a little wiggle room there at the end?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, I think anytime you're up 17 at half you want to get it over 20 before it gets to 10, and we did that. When they got cooking there, they started making some 3s. And Timmy was in the lane. We still had I think enough of a cushion there.

Q. Bryce seemed to play --

COACH McCAFFERY: He was great. The way he ran the break in the first half is how he was running at the end of the year. It's been how he's been running it lately. We're a different team. He's pushing it.

His decision-making today was phenomenal. 5-1 assists/turnovers. He locked in on the glass. And this is a team that rebounds. He gets seven rebounds, 17 points, made his free throws.

In the second half, that one stretch where we were really struggling offensively for about three or four minutes, he made a huge basket to beat the shot clock; he played like a senior.

Q. Defense on Frazier?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yes. You look at Timmy, he still goes for 23. We did a good job corralling him, I think, in the first half for the most part. In the second half, then we got him seven turnovers. That was good. Do a little better next time.

Q. Do you think starting puts him in a better frame of mind?

COACH McCAFFERY: No question. That's true for everybody. There are some that for some reason like to come off the bench. I think he would much prefer to start.

Q. Aaron White was all over the place. 17 points, nine rebounds, assists/steals. Seems to do it all for you.

COACH McCAFFERY: I think from a stamina standpoint, I thought he was a different person. I don't know if I could have played him 32 minutes in an intense game eight weeks ago.

But he's still making plays. I mean, he's got three blocks, two steals, four assists, 17 points, nine rebounds, two dunks, five for six from the line. What more can you say? Very impressive freshman.

Q. The team got off to a fast start again like they did in the Minnesota game.

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I think that was the result of our defense. Stops and fastbreaks. Stop, fastbreak. Aaron White hit a couple of 3s in that run. We had them spread out. They were back to keep us from hitting layups and we hit a couple shots there.

Q. Rebounding was a big topic of emphasis after the Indiana game. How pleased are you with the last --

COACH McCAFFERY: It was a big topic after the Indiana game. But especially in this game. This team really goes after every 50/50 ball and every rebound the same way.

And they rely on second and third shot opportunities on the same possession. And we were ready for that. And we competed. You have to, or else they're just going to keep getting the ball back and make it that much harder for you. Just hang around, hang around, hit some 3s, Frazier gets going and that's what happened in the Illinois game.

Q. You don't necessarily have a guy who is going to have 15 rebounds a night or something like that. Are you pleased when you see the balance of --

COACH McCAFFERY: The way they played, that's what it has to be. It's got to be everybody. And that was the most impressive thing about Bryce Cartwright's line, in my opinion, because you know who their leading rebounder is, Frazier. So that point guard had to get in there and mix it up and he did.

Q. Was there any anxiety the '86/'87 team getting ready and wondering how your team would perform with all that attention on one of the great teams?

COACH McCAFFERY: You know what, in all honesty, Rick, I have the same level of anxiety for every game no matter what. If it's the first game of the season. If it's a crucial Big Ten game. You know, I'm very focused. I prepare hard. Get these kids ready.

You know, the only thing I talked to them about was just understanding who came before you and what legacy they left.

And the standard that we aspire to. I mean, they were ranked number one. They were a bucket away from going to the Final Four. That's a team that legitimately could have won the national championship. So that's where we want to be.

And that's the standard of what all Iowa fans expect of Iowa basketball. We have a long ways to go yet. But we're making progress. And I felt they responded to that challenge and wanting to perform with these guys here.

Q. The inside passing has been crystal the last couple of games; is that just kind of getting comfortable with one another?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it's also a function of White and McCabe, they're good passers. Basabe is not bad but he's more of a post-up receiver/finisher than he is a high level dump down passer or drive and kick guy. So I think that's got a little to do with it.

Q. Were you worried that maybe Bryce wasn't going to get back to this level?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think very briefly, very briefly, because at the beginning we're just trying to figure out what was wrong with him. He had a multitude of things that affected his energy level, affected his concentration.

He wasn't himself. So I can yell at him or whatever, but he just wasn't physically ready to do it. There were a couple of times where I felt like he was back healthy, and then was still sideways a little bit with his game. And that was disappointing. That's when I challenged him to play both ends of the floor.

You're not just the guy who runs the break and throws the ball to open people and makes a shot once in a while. You have to understand that you're the point of attack, defensively. And once he bought into that, he's been a different player.

He can affect the game. Some guys can't do it. He can. He's doing it.

Q. The Wisconsin game, the way he played the Wisconsin game that it was in there or was it frustrating trying to get it back out there?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think we all saw it, that, okay, this is him, he's back. He had a couple of bumps in the road after that, I think going back to Pat's question, wait a minute, is he back or isn't he back?

But we had a talk about 10 days ago. He said now just tell me exactly what you need me to do. I just want to make -- and I told him.

I said you have to -- I am not going to put you in the starting lineup. I am not going to play you the minutes you want until you commit to stopping your man. And in making good decisions and pushing the ball in the break and doing it consistently and effectively with great effort.

He said okay. All right. I'll do it. And he's been doing it.

Q. You've played four games in nine days, and your effort still seems strong, didn't seem fatigued today. Do you feel like the team -- how do you think the team's performing?

COACH McCAFFERY: I was really concerned. I mean, the game the other night was pretty intense. And you've got an afternoon game today. We didn't have a day off, Thursday/Friday, how hard did we go yesterday? Because the game's at 2:00. We're practicing at 3:00. Gotta wait till school's over then '86 '87 team shows up for practice, what's our focus going to be, how hard do I push them.

But I thought they were pretty good in terms of being professional and locking into the

game plan and working hard. I didn't keep them out there forever. But we went hard. We went hard the last two days. Because they do some things with their press. And they do some things with changing defenses and they do some things with their rebounding and how they defend.

If we didn't get them ready for that, it wouldn't matter if we had fresh legs. So they were going to play hard today. I was pretty sure of it. And so they'll get a well deserved day off tomorrow.

Q. Look at, coming off last week, lose to Nebraska, give up 103 to Indiana, wondering where this team is going to go? To look back now, to get two wins now says something?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it does. But I go back to this. The Nebraska game we played pretty well in that game for a lot of the game. People thought we were going to win, we had the lead. They made three or four plays at the end we didn't make. That was unfortunate.

But I respect Nebraska. I respect their players. And they have some good players that make good plays. Indiana, offensively, we were pretty good. Scored 89 points, shoot 80 percent in the second half. We executed our break and we executed our offense. And we scored. They're a lot bigger than we are.

So disappointed in the rebounding. Disappointed in the defense. But everything's not awful. There were good things in that game. Okay. What do we have to correct? We have to correct the defense. We've got to get on the glass.

The other stuff is good. We need to stay positive so that they don't get beaten down and feel like, oh, we just lost two games. We lost to two good teams. We just beat two good teams. We have another good team coming up Thursday night.

Q. A lot of ups and downs for your team and other teams in the league, how do you use that momentum from these past two games to spur into next Thursday?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, we're not really going to change a lot in terms of how we approach game prep for Northwestern. As you know, it's a very unique prep anytime you're playing Billy and the Princeton stuff and he's done some things with it for his team that's really made it difficult to stop.

We played them here last year. They made 16 three's, made 14 the other night when

they beat Nebraska. So we've got to lock into what they do, how they do it. And then do the things that we think will be successful at the offensive end and rebound and those types of things.

But I think we're going down there with, legitimately, a pretty high confidence level in terms of how we're playing. But I think we have great respect for what they've done, where they are. They've got some great wins.

Certainly beating Michigan State because it was a great win for them, shows you what they're capable of doing.

Q. Are you getting more consistency now?

COACH McCAFFERY: I do. I think we are. I thought it was great to get Eric May back, he gave us 12 quality minutes. Still need to get Melsahn going a little bit. Got his six points. That's great.

But we need a little more rebounding from him. And then we've got things to figure out with Archie, Brommer and Olaseni. But I'm able to rotate Basabe, White and McCabe and able to rotate Gatens, Oglesby and Eric May, Marble and Bryce. We've got a pretty good nucleus there of smalls and bigs. But at some point in time we're going to need the five men to give us the quality minutes that Archie and Brommer have given us at some time.

Q. You seemed to start your team hard on both ends of the floor; how satisfying is it to watch that as a coach?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I think the one thing we recognized in the second half was the first four minutes are going to be critical when you have a 17-point lead. If you're on the other end, that thing goes from 17 to 10, it's a completely different game. You want to come out with the right mindset and get a lead and you want to come out in the second half and get it past 20 and that's what we did, and I thought that was really a key part of the game.

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