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An Interview With:

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. They don't give these games to just anybody against North Carolina for the ACC-Big Ten challenge. They must think pretty highly of you and your program. Is this another chance, another opportunity for you to showcase your program in front of a national audience against a marquee opponent?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, absolutely. It's a tremendous opportunity. You know, I think any time you play in this challenge, you're going to play a terrific opponent, but I mean, everybody knows that Carolina is a little different. Of course I played in that league, I coached in that state, I know what that means. I have tremendous respect for Coach Williams. I've known him a long time. You know, it's a nationally televised game on ESPN. It's just a great opportunity for our guys to put together a game plan and try to go on the road and beat a top-five team in a difficult environment and do the things that we do well and compete against a team that physically is very gifted, certainly with size and speed and depth, length, I mean, all of those things.

You know, it's a great opportunity. That's what college basketball is all about, being in those types of situations and seeing how you perform.

Q. We all know Marcus Paige, and last year it seemed like he did a lot for them, but it seems like this year he doesn't have to do as much. Talk about that.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, a lot of guys playing well. I still think in a lot of ways he's such an incredibly integral part of what they do. He can have the ball, he can go off the ball. He's going to be a late-game shot maker, always has been, incredibly unselfish. He can get points or he can get assists, whatever his team needs, and you're right, he's got pieces around him. He's got guys that can score inside, he's got wing players that can do some things. They have depth at the point guard position if they want to make him just a scorer at a particular point in time.

There's a reason why he was Preseason Player of the Year candidate in the country, not just in his conference.

Q. You went after him pretty aggressively, but you were kind of trying to make up for lost ground to go after somebody like Marcus. I know you were at a lot of games of his until he ended up picking North Carolina. What did you see of him in high school to make him somebody you'd really like to --

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, when you take over a new program, especially one that we were somewhat depleted, and so your initial instinct is to do something right away. What can I do right away to improve what we have, and we were very fortunate, we got Melsahn and Bryce Cartwright. We needed those guys that year. But if you start stockpiling too many guys in that class, you're never going to make the progress you need to make. We needed to look at the next year and the next year after that. He had just completed his sophomore year.

I'm trying to salvage the class we had, complete the class we have, lock into the junior class, which was obviously Uthoff and Oglesby, but he was the guy in the sophomore class that we went after, yeah, because I went up to see -- I had heard about him, knew he was good, went up to see him, and I said, he's special, he's different; he's a difference maker, and just a fabulous person on top of it. You know, he would have been a great fit for what we were trying to build at that time.

We were very well-received by Linn-Mar High School, and then of course he played with Adam and Mike, and the Martin Brothers team. We went to every game that summer that they played for the entire month of July, and then maxed out on our recruiting opportunities that fall, and then he committed, I guess, I think it was between Thanksgiving and Christmas, sometime in there.

We would have continued that same -- with that same intensity level. If he wasn't going to come, it was probably better that we knew then. Obviously we hoped he did not, but he found a place that was good for him. It's been good for him. He's been good for them. I have a very good relationship with him, with his family.

This summer when I took Patrick to Chris Paul's camp he was there and spoke to Patrick and spoke to me. He's tremendous, and I stay in touch with his dad regularly. His dad is a big fan of Mike and Adam, as well.

There's great feelings there. Obviously, like you said, I wish we had a little more time maybe to prove that

we could get it going here and he could be a major part of that. It was a little bit of a different situation for him; could he get his arms around that that quickly. I think he was starting to buy in, but at the same time he had Carolina calling, and that was, I think in his mind, an opportunity he couldn't pass up at that time.

Q. Are you where you hoped you would be through seven games?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't know that anybody is where they want to be. Even if you're undefeated, you still feel like we should be better defensively. We should be better offensively. This guy should be better, that guy should be better. You know, I think we're playing pretty well, and we've got to play better.

Q. What's at the top of your list in terms of things you want to address in practice?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, obviously we've got to be better offensively. Our execution hasn't been too bad, our shooting hasn't been great. We shot it well enough in pretty much all the games, with the exception of the second half against Texas. Our turnovers weren't great, but then they got better. We were taking better care of the ball. Our defense has been pretty good. It's going to need to be better. I think we're rebounding okay. I think you look at our team and say, okay, who's playing well, who's not playing well. Pretty much everybody is playing pretty well. Some guys aren't playing up to their expectations or what our expectations were for them, but it's still early, and we've got time.

Q. What kind of challenges are your guys going to face going against Carolina?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you know, they've got great length, great speed, so you're going to deal with -- they're going to be up in the passing lanes, they'll be trapping at times, so you deal with that, and then they'll press some and they'll play close at half court some, but then they've got a lot of size, so if you get it to the rim, can you finish, can you make a good decision at the rim. So that's a challenge for anybody.

If you're driving the ball, if you're trying to make a play in traffic, because mistakes equal points pretty much against them. There are going to be points, so you've got to be smart with how we move the ball, how we stay spaced and the shot selection is going to be critical, and we've got to get back because they're going to run.

Q. Do you have any idea how many games, Martin Brothers, you watched those last two years? Going into senior year I think you were personally at almost every game --

FRAN McCAFFERY: We pretty much went to every one for two years, and they were pretty much playing every day in that month, sometimes twice, probably three times at some point. But usually twice. Yeah, so I had a

really good feel for that team. I went to the tournaments where they were participating, and they were in a lot of different ones throughout the country. We saw a lot of other players, obviously, as well, and that's the hard thing sometimes, but it was an easier decision when -- I felt all three were difference makers and they were all on the same team, so it made a lot more sense for me.

Q. You touched on the shooting struggles a little bit. Is that more of a coincidence that multiple people are going through slumps or is it something you can make an adjustment for?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think there's a lot of factors that go into that. We've got a couple guys maybe trying to be a little more than they should be right now, and they've got to settle down a little bit. It's one of the things in particular with Josh that I've been proud of, his shot has gotten better, his percentages are coming up. But he's really good when it comes to assist/turnovers. He doesn't turn the ball over. He's a terrific passer, always been that way. He's never hunted shots, even though he's a shooter.

I think in Pete's case, we've got to get him to where -- he is who he is. I think he's trying to do a little bit too much. He's trying to be aggressive, which I respect because that's the kind of person he is. He knows he's not shooting it well, so he's trying to be more aggressive, he's trying to make more plays off the dribble, he's really competing defensively, he's competing on the glass because I'm playing him at the 3 sometimes.

But everybody has got to work it out individually. Getting a ton of shots in practice, they have made shots in practice, they're going to make shots in games. Fortunately we have had enough guys make them on nights when others are off. Obviously, Mike and Clemmons were not good last game from a shooting standpoint, but they're always good in every other aspect of the game, and then Jarrod, Brady and Josh hit some shots in the last game. So that's the kind of team we have.

Q. Did Brady have much pain after the game?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's always got a little discomfort, but it wasn't intense pain. We haven't seen a lot of that yet, so we'll just have to see. It's really the first time he's had extensive days in practice, extensive minutes in games where we're really pushing him, so we'll see if he can handle it or if we've got to shut him down.

Q. If Pete can reach the potential that you want him to reach this year, not in his career but just this year, does he have the ability to kind of change the backcourt in a positive way?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Absolutely, he knows that. I think that's why he's pressing a little bit. He knows that, and he's got that capability. He's got a quick release. He's got a feel for how to play. So we'll just keep working with him on it. He's shooting it in practice really well, and he

just needs to get going one game, and I think one game will get him going.

Q. Do you plan to use Brady at North Carolina?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah.

Q. Are you consciously trying to get Woodbury involved more early in the game? Seems like early in the game he's getting those post touches.

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, I wouldn't say that. We view him as a viable option offensively. We typically start games in motion, and motion is an equal-opportunity offense. He's open, he shoots, he's not afraid to shoot it. He's shooting the ball well. He's more comfortable offensively than he's ever been. He's feeling good with his shot, with his moves, with his passing. And he likes to be part of the offense. Whether he's shooting it or not, he's very much a part of what we're doing. I'm very proud of how he's continued to develop.

Q. Gabe kind of indicated afterwards when we talked to him that he'd probably be leaving after the UNC game. Is that true?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I think that's the plan. Nothing is finalized yet, but I think when he looked at it, it wasn't ready to go right then. It was game day when his dad passed and then we had another one quick, and then this opportunity he wants to play. Like I said, we'll accommodate his wishes, whatever he wants to do, we'll get him home, we'll get him back, whatever is comfortable for him and his family.

Q. Have you run any offensive combinations that you've liked? Seems like you've been obviously mixing and matching out there.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I stayed with the starting lineup. Coming off the bench, you've got to be careful. Do you go wholesale substitutions or do you sub them in one at a time. I tried to get Dom in a little bit earlier last game. He had really been working hard in practice. I thought he was very good. There's times where you say, okay, we've got to get Pete going. Well, if we're going to get him going then we've got to get him more minutes, but there's times when Clemmons is playing so well you can't get them back in as much as you'd like, so it's going to be a game-by-game thing and a feel how we utilize those guys off the bench.

But Gabe is playing great. It was good to see Trey get going. I think that was important for him. Offensively, he's proven he can do some things. Defensively, he's got a little bit of work to do, and he's working on that.

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