

**February 19, 2012**



An interview with:

## **COACH McCAFFERY**

### **Q. Coach, start with Matt?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, you know, I said the other day it was a shame that we didn't ride his performance in the second half at Penn State because he was so spectacular. He's just been playing as well, if not better, than anybody in this league. Coaching is easy when you can start running some clock, and then run something for him. We just kept going to him a different way, and he kept ringing the bell.

### **Q. How big was that when they closed it to 10 and they made a little run?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Closed it to 10. We felt pretty good. We still had a ten-point lead. We panicked a little bit, not in the sense that we were coughing it up, but in the sense that we were shooting the ball quick. Now Zach was open, Marble was open at one time. But when a team's trying to come back, what they want you to do is shoot the ball quick there, and they were scoring quickly.

So the lead went from what? 18 to 10 or 19-10 very quickly, and that's not what you want. You want to at least take some time. They were getting very physical. Well, you're not going to get to the free-throw line if you're just jump shooting the ball. So we started putting it on the deck, and we got to the free-throw line and made enough.

### **Q. Matt knew you guys were fading a little bit and he finished strong.**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think the toughest one, Rick, is the first one. That gave us a little bit of breathing room, then he got confidence and then we got confidence. Our defense perked up after that, and then he just kept going. We kept going to something different.

At the end of the shot clock from 25 feet, that was pretty good too.

### **Q. Melsahn brought real energy to the game.**

COACH McCAFFERY: He did. I'm really proud of him. The thing, you look and say 13-7, 4 for 5, 5 for 6, pretty good day. But the way he impacted the game was five blocks. It changes everything. It changes everything for them. It changes everything for us.

### **Q. The way he played defensively, the blocks, obviously, but overall interior defense. Is that something that's been missing in games?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think his energy level has been decent. It's not been what I think he was capable of. I think we saw today what he's capable of. He's going against a lottery pick, and he played pretty well.

### **Q. How much did you challenge your team based on the last game with Indiana at Bloomington where they scored 103 points?**

COACH McCAFFERY: We've had issues at the defensive end of the floor all year long. I've challenged them in a variety of ways and every time we have faltered.

The thing I think that made this win special for us is we needed everybody. How great was Darius Stokes? He plays five minutes, gets a rebound and then he gets a tip in and played great defense and played with great energy. Branden Stubbs was on fire, Andrew Brommer with the tip dunk. Archie's in for one minute and gets a rebound, actually two rebounds.

So all of that together, we can survive a 4 for 17 by Marble, in the fact that he was absolutely exhausted at the end of the game. I thought late, Oglesby and Gatens helped him handle the ball and so did Aaron White.

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**Q. The rotation you had with Andrew, Gabe and Darius, having all three of them in at once?**

COACH McCAFFERY: The one thing we had is when that lineup's on the floor, it's a little inexperience. Not so much with Andrew, but the other two. It's a lot of great size, so we could compete in the post, we could compete on the glass, and that's what we did.

Whereas, it's not necessarily as good offensively, it can actually be even better defensively.

**Q. Your rebounding was a big issue, and you guys won the battle.**

COACH McCAFFERY: You know what, I mean, you look at -- there are so many things you can look at in that game. One of the things was 20 offensive rebounds and 15 defensive rebounds. They had more offensive rebounds than we had defensive rebounds, and that just couldn't be the case tonight. We had to limit them.

They're so big and strong, especially now that they've taken Jones out of the starting lineup, and they're going with the big lineup. You've got 6'9", 6'9", 6'11", you've got Oladipo who is 6'6". And that is a big, athletic, rebounding team.

Early on they were flying at the glass. So I thought the way we limited them to 11 and we had 16, and we had 41 to their 35 was very important.

**Q. Three games under .500, is that something you look at and say, hey, we're getting closer?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, you look at three wins over ranked teams, I mean, that's pretty impressive. Obviously, one of them was on the road, and they're coming in here Thursday and they're ranked again, deservedly so. Playing as well as anybody in the country.

So I think it's an example of what we're capable of. So I think we have to look at that and say, all right, that's how good we can be. Now in some games that maybe we could have or should have won, what did we do? It's frustrating to look back and say, boy, we were really close. We had a double digit lead in the second half against Nebraska.

There are different games, but at some point you have to respect what they did, learn from what we didn't do and try to get better. As the season has progressed, we have done that.

**Q. How much of a meat grinder is the Big Ten where Penn State beats you, and Illinois gets whacked yesterday, and then you take out Indiana? Just from top to bottom, it seems anybody can beat anybody.**

COACH McCAFFERY: It's the best conference top to bottom in the country. They're not even close. The quality of teams top to bottom is the reason they're the number one ranked conference in the NCAA.

**Q. How much did the pace of play did you want to play at that pace at the start? Did you think you could --**

COACH McCAFFERY: Normally I would want to play faster, but with looking and saying, okay, Dev's going to have to play 38. We played him 40 the other night. I didn't want to play him 40 today. 38's a lot. And I knew they were coming after him, and they're a big, strong, physical athletic team. So we didn't want to play nuts early. But our game is to go and to get people opportunities in transition. So we weren't afraid to do that.

**Q. Why did you want to bring Darius Stokes aboard, and why did he want to come here when he could have gone elsewhere and played a little bit more right away?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, it's interesting because we've talked about this before. When I got the job, you're not sure for about two or three months what you have on your own team, let alone what you might need in recruiting. So I knew we needed help and I made a trip up to Cedar Rapids to see Marcus Paige, because I knew he was going to be a priority, and Darius was playing.

The night I was there, he played great. Of course, I remembered his dad, and I talked to the coaches up there and said, What's he doing? Well, he's got some things, but he's not sure. I said, well, you know, he can play for me. Based on what I saw, he can play for me.

That's why we redshirted him last year, because I think he's got a chance. I don't look at him as a walk-on and he's going to run the other team's offense. He's somebody that has some definite talent and character.

So he's very cerebral, comes out of a great program. In the situation that we were in, if I asked Eric May to go today, he would have gone. And

anybody that's seen him in the last three games knows he's not even close to being himself. So we just need to give him time to heal.

So we told Darius to play with energy and use your size and get on the glass. Two big rebounds, and one was a put back.

So I remember to go back to specifically answering your question, we invited him down with his parents for a visit, and we offered the opportunity. And they said well, we'll think about it. He said no, we're not going to think about it. He said I've always wanted to be a Hawk, so it was done right there.

**Q. How close would you put Bryce and Eric to possibly being back Thursday?**

COACH McCAFFERY: They're both real close, real close. Eric felt a little bit better today for really the first time. We'll see how he does tomorrow. Bryce is substantially better than he was a couple three days ago. He might still be one or two games away. He's doing things today that he wasn't doing yesterday, and that's the encouraging thing. He's progressing at a good pace.

**Q. How beneficial is it for the long run when you get guys like Darius, like Branden, in there in a big game environment?**

COACH McCAFFERY: The thing about those two in particular, they're smart. So they understand what it means to play to your strengths and your weaknesses in a situation like that and understand what are we trying to do. So I trust those guys. They devour the scouting report, and they come early and they stay late and they play all summer and they work in the weight room. So they wanted the opportunity.

Any walk-on that joins any team hopes that one day he gets his number called, and sometimes it never comes. It came today.

**Q. With Bryce out and all of that, how does playing at home help?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it really helped our energy level, especially when they made the run. We had some guys that were pretty tired out there. I thought, Aaron White and Marble in particular. Gatens can play 80 minutes, but Josh was sucking wind pretty good there too, but he really battled. I'm proud of him too.

**Q. The first time you guys played, Indiana had 58 points in the paint. Today you outscored them in the paint. Can you talk about the difference there?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, obviously, it was a focal point coming into the game. We did a pretty good job on Zeller, I think. But the other thing we did is we kept the ball out of the paint off penetration. I think that's the critical thing, because once Oladipo or Jones or Hulls turn the corner on you and there is a help off the wing, that's when they kill you. So we tried to make sure that didn't happen, and we did a good job of that today.

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