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An Interview With:

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. What did you think of that Wisconsin performance? Were you surprised?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I thought that was a great game. No, nothing surprises me, pretty much in anything with this game.

They played tough, they played smart, they didn't turn it over, they made shots, they made shots when they needed to, they rebounded, they got ahead. I think that helped, especially when you're on the road and you want to get ahead. That's an experienced team. Very few teams are that experienced. They've got three senior starters in the front line, two fifth-year seniors, junior guard, sophomore guard. It's an experienced team.

Q. How have they changed since Jackson has gotten more involved?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, Jackson, first of all, he's really a good player. I mean, he's very good at both ends of the floor. He can create, he can score, and he can defend, and he's tough and he's got a body that enables him to play that style. They can still go eight deep, which I think is important.

Q. What do you stress defensively when you're going up against a team like Wisconsin who in recent games has done a better job of not turning the ball over?

FRAN McCAFFERY: What we have to be able to do is continue to defend the way we've been defending. I mean, if you can turn them over, that's great, but you've got to make them miss and you've got to give them one when it's all said and done.

Q. What does Jackson bring, and how do you think he's acclimated himself since he had to replace Gasser?

FRAN McCAFFERY: The thing about Jackson that was impressive to me is he's not afraid to shoot the ball at the end of the game, so he's not a guy who's subbing in for somebody else, he's a guy that looks at himself like I belong here. I'm supposed to be a starter; I'm one of the better players in the league. He carries himself that way, with a little bit of a swagger that you need if you're that guy who not only -- forget about Gasser, somebody else was -- Marshall was starting before that.

Q. Melsahn Basabe is healthy now. Do you think that's the main reason he's playing so well right now?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he's moving so much better, yeah.

Q. When you look at Ben Brust, is this what you thought he would do two and a half years into his career?

FRAN McCAFFERY: When I watched him, I thought he could play both guard spots, and for the first two years he was pretty much a 2 only, and what you're seeing him do now is really deliver the ball and drive and kick and take care of it. He's leading them in assists. His turnovers aren't that high, so he's got a good ratio there, yet he can still score. What you're seeing is a guy who's comfortable in his junior year, knows the system, knows what's required of him and has accepted that well and is fulfilling his role.

Q. Can you talk about patience against a team like Wisconsin which makes you earn about every basket. Is that one of the things you talk to your freshmen point guards right away? You do anyway, but is it heightened?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, I'm not

as concerned about patience as I am we want to get a good shot. You can get a good shot five, six seconds into the shot clock if it's a good shooter taking a good shot. If he's open, shoot it. Patience doesn't always equate to we got a good shot that time. We just ran the clock down. Might get a worse shot than you had 13 seconds ago. So I think against them it's good shots that have a chance to go in.

Q. Against a team like Wisconsin that looks to slow you down, are you still going to look to push the pace?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We are, and I think they're looking to push it a little more than they have. I think Jackson is involved in that. They're pushing the ball. They've got guys that can run. They aren't afraid to go a little bit more. The scores would indicate they're still kind of where they were, but they're a little bit more of an opportunistic running team than they've been in the past.

Q. What can Adam Woodbury do to be a little bit more consistent in terms of scoring?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's just got to concentrate and finish. He's got to attack the rim. He's flipping it up there a little bit occasionally and fading away a little bit. Those are common mistakes for a young big guy. But he's working. I mean, he's rebounding, he's playing phenomenal defense. He's been tremendous. You know, it's unfortunate that he's missing some shots that he would normally make because then you'd be talking about how great he's been because he'd be hitting double-doubles. But he's performing exactly like we hoped he would.

Q. Do you worry about his offense maybe impacting his psyche a little bit?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think you always do because he knows he's missing shots that he's capable of making. It's different if you're missing threes. Well, I missed a three. But if you miss a close one, well, you're supposed to make a close one. Everybody knows that. He knows that. And he will, and he has. So I'm not worried about that aspect of it. We just stay positive with him.

Q. How much easier is it for you knowing that you've got juniors coming off the bench that are playing the way they are and they seem to really accept their roles?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's a great feeling to have because these guys don't rattle, and the other thing is we have offense coming off the bench. A lot of times you go to your bench and you have tough guys, experienced guys that can help you win, but then you might have a scoring drought because you don't have the offense. That's why the guys that are starting are starting typically.

But we have I think equal performance coming off the bench in terms of offense, and in some games it might be even more, especially when Zach and Melsahn and Josh are playing the way they're capable of playing. Eric has been tremendous, but I think more as a passer than as a scorer. We know he can score, and he has scored a little bit.

Q. What kind of emotions do you think will be in the building?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think there will be tremendous emotion in the building. There will be between 60 and 80 members of the Street family at the game. I think anybody that was from that era will remember him, and the fact that we're celebrating his life more so than remembering his death, I think that's the critical thing, and I think that's what the Street family wants us to do, and I think what our guys will do is we'll try to play the game the way he played it.

Q. How do you teach something about somebody who played 20 years ago to players who were either very, very young or not even born at that time?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, the first thing we did is we told them about it. Jerry Strom was here, and he talked about it. But we showed them -- yesterday morning we showed the film of him that's in the Hall of Fame. We brought that over and showed that to them so they could hear people talk about him, they could see footage of him, and they could try to get a feel for what it was like when everyone found out.

It's always been amazing to me that everybody in the state seems to know where they were when they heard the news that he was gone. I think with that meeting ended yesterday, I think they had a pretty good feeling of what he meant to this program and how he's still very much a part of the family. They walk by the memorial right in front of our locker room, and you wonder how much do

they think about that. They see it every day. So they knew who he was, they knew what he meant, they've read that. But I think they have a much better feeling now.

Q. Do you remember where you were specifically when you first found out?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I just remember hearing about it that night. I was an assistant at Notre Dame. It was '93. I've told this before. When I had dinner with Coach Davis in '88, he had just gotten a commitment from him, and that was so early, and nobody did that back then. You were afraid to, was it right, was it not right. Chris wanted to be a Hawk and Tom wanted him in the program, and that was that. And he said, I think this kid is going to be really good.

I remember taking an interest to watch him play, and I said, wow. You just didn't see guys that tall with that kind of motor back then, that had that kind of skill set that could affect a game in so many different ways. And it seemed to energize his teammates and the entire building whenever he played.

I just remember thinking how horrible it was. This guy, in my mind, I was being objective, he was without question a first-round draft pick and an NBA player for a long time, and I just remember thinking what would I feel like right now if that was one of our guys, if that was one of my teammates. And I just can't imagine.

You know, and I hope that our guys understand that when they think about that. We go to pregame meals all the time together, and we leave together or we leave separately, and the whole idea that you would get a phone call or you'd be called into a meeting and one of us is gone, I just can't imagine.

And so I think there will be so many people in that building with so many different emotions.

Q. You have a lot of experience, high-caliber post people, but the experience that Wisconsin has and the style they play and precision that they seem to play in the post, what kind of challenges do they present for your post players?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, all three of them are playing incredibly well right now, and so is Kaminsky for that matter. He got poked in the eye last night. He was on his way to a big game.

But they all have kind of different games, Evans, Berggren, Bruesewitz, they're all really good and they're all really experienced but they're

all really different. So you've got to understand who does what, how we're going to play them, and you've got to be able to fight the post, you've got to be able to play them from the perimeter because they can shoot, they can drive it, all three of them can drive it. It's rare that you have your 3, 4 and 5 all can shoot threes, all can post-up, all can drive it. That's pretty complete right there.

Q. Do you worry about the players feeling too much pressure Saturday to make sure everything works out right?

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, I think there's enough pressure just game to game and just trying to remember what they have to do. I think we'll be okay there.

Q. A lot of people are going to wonder about you and Bo Ryan; I think in Chicago you guys went out to dinner or something or talked Phillies baseball?

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, we had the Big Ten -- before the Big Ten media day, we go in the night before and we all have dinner. Jim Delaney addresses all of us, it's essentially the start of the season, and we sat together, and yeah, there's no issues there at all.

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