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An interview with:

COACH McCAFFERY

COACH McCAFFERY: I just want to begin by discussing the article that appeared this weekend and the ensuing media attention generated by that.

I've been in this business 28 years, pride myself in doing things the right way. So does the University of Iowa. Anything that took place on any recruiting weekend is by the book. Anything that happened other than that is unintentional. Without question, this has been blown way out of proportion. That's all I'm going to say about it.

We have a game Sunday. That's what I'll address right now.

Q. Jarryd is not listed. Is the foot still bothering him?

COACH McCAFFERY: Foot's still bothering him. If you asked me yesterday did I think he would play, I would say no. Today he may play. Will he start? I don't know. He might.

I think what will happen is he's going to -- we don't practice today. He's going to work out tomorrow for the first time in a while, and Friday. We'll see how he does after the workout on Thursday, see how he does on Friday. If he does okay Thursday and Friday, we'll probably play him. If he has any kind of setback, then we'll sit him, keep working on it.

Q. How concerned are you big picture with him with the foot?

COACH McCAFFERY: Very. Because, you know, in conjunction with Matt, these are our two most experienced performers. And, quite frankly, as I think you would have expected, they both were playing phenomenally well. Jarryd has a

great motor. He's in great shape. Our style of play is perfect for him. He just is an experienced front court low-post presence at both ends of the floor. Matt of course is in the best shape of his life. Seems like he was making every shot, but more importantly driving the ball to the basket, making some plays for other people.

Those two guys together take a lot of pressure off of our young kids who now have to step up and play like veterans in their first college game.

Q. What is the prognosis on Matt post surgery?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think the real question will be, can he play in our first two ball games? I think that's the dilemma we're faced with right now. He wants to play. We could probably put something on there that would enable him to play.

The concern you have is the reason we did surgery is so this would not become a chronic problem for him over the next two years. That's why you offer surgery rather than tape it up and play.

It may be foolish to rush him. But, again, if he gets to the point where we can put something on there and he can play with no risk of hurting it, he's going to have trouble catching the ball and he's going to have trouble gathering when he drives to the basket, but eventually, you know, we'll give him something on there that's less intrusive, but it wouldn't be right away. Might be he misses the first game or two. Might be we run him out there with something on there that would protect him.

That will probably be right up-to-the-game decision.

Q. Big picture, without Matt and Jarryd, how much does that put you back as you're trying to implement this new style without them there?

COACH McCAFFERY: You know, I don't think from that standpoint it's that big of a negative because the other guys are getting all the reps now. I'd like for Matt and Jarryd to be getting some reps from that standpoint. Even though they're experienced, but McCabe and Basabe and Bryce Cartwright and Marble, they have really gotten a ton of reps. We had a scrimmage against Ball State on Sunday and those guys played a ton of minutes, got to make mistakes, got to make great plays, got to see what it was like.

So from that standpoint, the young kids I think are developing. Long-term we need those two guys. Your question was big picture. Big picture for us to be competitive with the schedule in front of us, we need those two guys in the lineup. You're talking about two guys in double-figure scores, how to play without making mistakes. We need low-post presence, especially on the defensive end of the floor. You're talking about some big, strong, powerful guys in this league that Jarryd can defend.

I think he was improving dramatically prior to his injury with that part of his game. I was looking forward to him being a double-figure scorer and I think he still will be.

Q. How does Melsahn fit in the low post? Is that going to be out of position?

COACH McCAFFERY: He's always been a low-post player. He's a little on the thinner side. He's not a perimeter player. He's a four, and undersized five. One of the things that helps him is he's long. You look and say he's 6'7" and a half, a shade under 6'8". How can he play against 6'9", 6'10", 6'11" players? He's long and bouncy.

The thing he does, he rebounds the basketball. He rebounds with two hands, goes and gets it. If you look at his numbers from his first day of practice, we chart everything live, his numbers have just been off the charts. I haven't seen numbers like this from a freshman as a rebounder. His offense is going to be up and down. That's going to be like that all year long.

We're going to go to him. He's going to have to develop a few more moves. He's got a couple. He's going to understand what physical play is, which he hasn't seen before, nothing like he's going to see in the Big Ten. But hopefully he'll

get an opportunity to settle down because he's going to get the minutes and the opportunity.

Q. What are you liking right now in the combination of Cully and Bryce on the court together?

COACH McCAFFERY: They looked really good together over the weekend. I did it Saturday and Sunday. We went back to putting them against each other. Makes the workouts a little more competitive when you put Bryce on one team and Cully on the other.

But what Bryce can do, is he can make plays from the wing and he can score the ball. When we signed him, we knew he could be a point guard for us and run the offense. We weren't sure of his scoring ability. He shot the ball well, gets in the lane, draws the defense, then he kicks it off.

Having two smaller, quicker guards has been a good thing for us. I think you'll see that lineup on the floor periodically.

Q. Early signing period starts next week. You have two in the fold, finalist for another kid announcing on Friday. Where are you beyond that? Do you feel like it's two or three in the early period?

COACH McCAFFERY: It's probably going to be two in the early period. Yeah, it's probably going to be two. Then we'll regroup. We've got a core group of guys that we're looking at. A number of other players will eventually pop up.

Q. What are the challenges or how do you proceed going into that late period next year from here to there?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I think you look at it two ways. Obviously you still have some needs. We need a little bit of size. But the one thing you're able to do is evaluate your own team as you then legitimately understand what your needs are. You think you know, but you never really know till you get in there. Sometimes you recruit two classes before you ever coach a game.

This gives us an opportunity to take our other two scholarships and really make an impact on who does what this year.

Q. Junior college an option for you?

COACH McCAFFERY: It is. A lot of those jamborees, were a couple, three weeks ago. We were at all of them. We got some guys. We've

had success in the past here. I think that's a possibility.

Q. When Cully and Bryce are on the court at the same time, who will be the designated point? Will it depend on the situation?

COACH McCAFFERY: Cully will be the point, Bryce will be the two if they're on the floor together.

Q. As you look back to your first year at Sienna, no expectations, team was picked for last, obviously overachieved, are you able to see any similarities between them?

COACH McCAFFERY: A lot of similarities from the standpoint that when you go into a situation like that, we only had a core group of guys. The one thing you've heard me say over and over to a man, they've bought into what we're doing. That's step one. Step two is we had great senior leadership from Antoine Jordan that year. I'm getting that same thing in Jarryd Cole. Antoine ended up being a first team all-conference player. I think Jarryd could be a really good player for us if he stays healthy. Antoine stayed healthy. That's one difference.

Then you look at Matt Gatens is a guy that I think can really benefit from a different style and from a little more talent around him. He's in great shape.

So there are similarities. We had some scorers on that team. We had a little bit of experience at the top. We had no depth and we had no size on that team. I know I've said before the difference is when you're in the Mac, you can go small. You look at my lineup, we started 6'6", 6'4", 6'3", 5'11", 5'8". We were last in the league in rebounding. Every rebounding category we were last. We shot threes, we drove it, we didn't turn it over. We took care of all the things we needed to take care of. I think you'll see this team do the same thing. Our turnovers will be down, our shot selection will be good.

The key is, you know, how do we play at crunch time? That team played well. We did. We won our share of close games. We lost some, too. But we were right there.

So we're going to be in some close games this year and that's when we're going to need relatively inexperienced guards to step up. That's where Gatens would be really a factor. When healthy, he's a shot-maker, he's a late-game free throw shooter, and he's a guy that won't panic. I

think Cully Payne really matured last year. I think he could be a guy that's not really playing like a young player, because he played 36 minutes a game last year. Cartwright has been around, just hasn't been here.

If those guys can play under pressure and make some plays at the end and we make our free throws, then I think we could have a similar experience.

Q. What are your expectations for Sunday?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, a couple things. Number one, we want to really compete. We want to defend. We want to get on the glass, take care of the effort aspects of the game. We don't want to play so fast that we're turning the ball over and driving into packs of people and making poor decisions. I think that will be a true test. Everyone is going to want to come out flying. Crowd wants to see it. I've been talking about it.

But, you know, you can run yourself right into a butt kicking if you don't know how to play fast. That's been the hardest thing I think for us in the first couple weeks, is sometimes you go fast to probe the defense, then you pull it back. There's nothing there. Now we grind it.

But we've attacked the defense in transition with mismatches, with guys on the side of the dribbler. Maybe we can get to the rim. Maybe we can get a quick, early punch right into the post.

But if it's not there, then we grind it. They've had to sprint back, get matched up. Maybe there are mismatches, we can start screening and cutting right away and get an easier shot.

Q. Are you happy with the decision making you've seen so far in practice?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it's always questionable. Not unhappy, but not happy. You know, we've got work to do there. They're trying. I mean, they're not just flying down the court and doing things that are out of character for each individual. I think that's what you have to watch for. You got to stay within yourself.

There's going to be five guys out there at one time that are running and slashing and cutting. Everybody has to know what his own personal strengths and weaknesses are. When they do that, the mistakes tend to be more limited.

Q. Are guys like Melsahn and McCabe maybe an advantage in a sense it's a new system, they're new?

COACH McCAFFERY: There's no question about that. No question about that. The terminology and everything is brand-new to everybody. So for a freshman they don't have that learning curve situation. Everybody's going through it.

Granted, the other guys have been through college basketball, so there's a lot of things that they don't necessarily know that the others have picked up playing a year or two or three in the Big Ten. But I think they'll benefit in other ways, as well, knowing that they're going to be able to play major minutes as freshmen, get shots, not get yanked.

When you have like the team I had last year with so many upperclassmen, three seniors and two juniors in the starting lineup, they've all been starters. It was hard for those guys coming in behind. You're coming out. Those guys are going back in. To settle down and be able to play through a mistake is not always a luxury you give those guys.

These kids will have that opportunity. Zach McCabe will come on the floor. If he misses a couple shots, turns it over, I'm going to leave him in there. I think it will help him dramatically in the long run.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

COACH McCAFFERY: You have guys for some reason who think you have to jump up in the air to make a pass. I've never seen that before. It's more than one guy. Stay on the floor when you want to feed the ball. If you jump, the guy isn't somehow open, it's going to be a turnover. That's the one glaring thing.

Q. Had Zach earned a starting spot before any of the injuries came up?

COACH McCAFFERY: Pretty close.

Q. What have you seen out of him in the first month?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, he may very well be our most consistent player.

Q. Fran, every university sells its alumni. You go to football games, see posters. How difficult is it to find that happy medium between here is an alumni that advanced to the highest level and also when you have a recruit

on a trip to try to do things that don't bend or even stray into the possible gray area of introductions?

COACH McCAFFERY: It's difficult because you like to think in all of those cases you mentioned there's a story to be told that may have some benefit.

But, you know, the rules preclude us from doing it intentionally. Everybody knows that at various places you might bump into somebody. It might be accidental. You try to make sure it doesn't happen at all. You try to make sure if it does, it's on a limited basis. That's just the way the rules are.

We all know that it happens a lot more at some places than others. You said it, there is a fine line. What's beneficial and what makes sense and what's against the rules? The bottom line is you have to follow the rules. We can debate them.

I'll tell you this story. If any of you were looking into my background, you would know that I had one other secondary violation in my coaching career. We sent a recruiting mail out in color on plain white paper. If it was on letterhead, it would have been legal. If it was in black and white on plain white paper, it would have been legal. But because it was in color on plain white paper, it was a violation, which we self-reported. That's the extent of my transgressions with the NCAA. But it gives you an idea of what we deal with. That was in Greensboro. Color paper keeper.

Q. You talked about getting media attention. I think it's probably obvious based on who the people that were involved. Are you worried about if it hurts your rep at all? I've heard some people say this is what somewhat of a black eye.

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't view it that way. I don't think we can ever completely control what other people say or think about any of us. But I think it's safe to say movie stars get publicity no matter what they do.

I'll be honest with you. I feel bad for them because they could not have been more delightful. When they come to an event, they just can't sit in the stands. So where do they sit? They stand on the sidelines for a while. They don't want to stand for four hours, so they have to put them somewhere. They asked if they could sit in my box. I'm not going to say no. You want to sit in my box? Absolutely. We made it very comfortable for

them.

They could not have been nicer to anybody that came in to say hello to meet them. I think that's unfortunate. Everybody looks at them funny. It was as innocent and unprepared as it could possibly be. And I don't want anybody to think anything. The kids certainly did nothing wrong. They just met somebody and moved on.

Greeting is legal. But what's your definition of a greeting? Does it go beyond 10 seconds? The whole thing probably lasted four minutes.

Q. Is it too early to decide your best defender or do you have a couple guys in line?

COACH McCAFFERY: It could be an issue (smiling).

I really like Jarryd as a post defender. I've been impressed with him. I think Eric May can be a shutdown guy. Basabe is a shot-blocker. He comes quick from seemingly out of nowhere. I think after that I've been impressed with [Andrew] Brommer. You don't think of Brommer as a defensive guy, but he understands positioning. His size and bulk can impact penetration in particular.

Where we haven't done a good job is close and recover. We close, we shut down penetration, we get over toward the ball, and we stop people from getting to the rim, but then we don't get back out. We've got to get that straightened out or teams will be making a lot of jumpers on us. We've got to work on that.

Q. Is zone a possibility?

COACH McCAFFERY: Zone's a possibility. If you know anything about my teams, we play zone, we press. We mix it. Depending upon health and foul trouble, we might be playing a lot of zone.

But the beauty of the zone, I think everybody thinks zone is you're trying to slow the game down. That's not the case at all. You watch Syracuse play. They play zone, they just blow it right down the floor. That's what we do. We play zone, we go right off the rebound. A lot of times there's a lot of rebounds because a lot of times there's jump shots taken.

I like zone. Some coaches are opposed to it. Some coaches like to pick one defense. You're always a function of your upbringing. I've always played for coaches that were changing defensive coaches, that constantly kept the opposition a little bit on edge as to what are they in. Is that a zone, is it a box-and-one, a triangle-and-two? What

happens with the ball things? Are they in the same defense? All of those things. Sometimes they press and trap, sometimes they press and drop back. You never really know what we're doing.

The downside of that is sometimes your own players don't even know. But sometimes the other team is more confused than we are.

Q. (Question regarding secondary break.)

COACH McCAFFERY: I was a big secondary break guy early in my career. The reason I am not any longer is because, in my opinion, it had a tendency to kill our primary break. They got so locked into spots, we never recognized two-on-one, three-on-two. We didn't run for the layup. We're running to get a layup and a dunk. A secondary break is sometimes post-up action, but sometimes it's screening action for jump shots.

We're running for a layup.

Q. On Sunday's exhibition, will there be some unconventional moments, meaning if it was a regular game you might do something one way, but maybe because you want to see how somebody handles a situation...

COACH McCAFFERY: That's a very difficult question to answer. Last year's team we wouldn't show anything. With three seniors, two juniors, we had everything in, wouldn't show anything to anybody, so anybody would look at us on tape. But we only have about half in, what we need in, because it's taking a little bit longer. Part of me doesn't want to show things, but part of me knows we got to get things ready in order to win the following Sunday in a game that counts.

So, we'll probably show what we have to. Thank you.

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