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An Interview With:

FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. Not that long ago you had to prep for this team; looking at what they've done since the time you played them, how much has changed in your preparations?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Everything. They don't play zone anymore, it's all man. They didn't play a possession of man up until our game until the last couple possessions of our game, and with about four minutes to go in the first half against Illinois, they went man and pretty much played it ever since.

Q. Is that kind of unusual for teams to just switch?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, it is. I think you'll typically see people shift emphasis but not completely. You know, and I'm sure Thad had his reasons and they were quite successful for a good portion of the schedule. I think he just made a decision to go back.

Q. Have you noticed are they a better team in your opinion?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't know. I think it makes them more susceptible to three-point shooting, and I think he probably felt like he's got enough athletes, clearly, to stay after people and contest and contain and pressure if he wants to and not give up as many threes. But again, I don't know, you'd have to ask him.

But you are susceptible -- if you're in a 2-3 zone you are susceptible to ball movement and three-point shooting, and if you're contesting -- you look at Syracuse, they've had great success with contesting and running out on your misses. They were doing that for a while.

Q. You've probably had as much success against Russell as anybody has. What did you do the first time to him that contained him?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't know that we did anything special other than respect him. I mean, he's a terrific player, and there's a lot of problems he presents. You look at his scoring, and it's very impressive, but he's a really good passer, and he gives it up easy, but he can shoot threes. He can go to the hole, so you've got to pay attention to him and you've got to know where he is and you've got to know the things he likes to do. But other than that, nothing special.

Q. You mentioned consistency last week, and this team needs to be consistent. Over coming that comeback against Minnesota, is that a step in the right direction for you, or how much is that a step in the right direction?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, we still weren't consistent enough in that game. The fact that we fought through I think is a testament to our team's character. I was really proud of how we fought because even though we weren't stopping them, we kept scoring. When we were not scoring on a couple of our losses, the Iowa State game, Michigan State game stick out in my mind, we couldn't stop them, and we weren't scoring. So at least when they were scoring, we kept scoring, and we had a 17-point lead, but when you give up a 17-point lead and go down four, a lot of teams are going to lose that game, and we didn't, especially on the road. It shows you that we've got enough toughness, and we got enough stops when we needed them.

Q. How big a moment can that be for Jarrod to get that game winner?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's been making big shots all year, but you're right, a game winner

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is whole 'nother thing. He was very comfortable. We ran it for him, and he drilled it. I think he's playing with that kind of confidence right now, and we need him to.

Q. Saturday's game is a sellout. It seemed like during the Michigan State game when things were going really well, that crowd was as good as it has been all year.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, our fans are amazing. I think my first year we had a couple sellouts, and we didn't have a great team. We had a pretty good team, but we had probably -- we had some good players, and they fought. I remember the Purdue game my first year they were ranked sixth and we beat them, and the crowd was a big part of that. Every home win that we've had they've a big part of it in terms of the energy level in the building, and hopefully it'll be the same way on Saturday.

Q. Was there a turning point for Jarrod's confidence since he's been here?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't know. You're right, he just appears to be more confident. I think it's probably been a more gradual thing. He's gradually -- he's been really good for the first minute he got here, but he's gradually gotten better. I think he's gradually become more comfortable and as a result probably has gotten more confidence. He's had to learn a new system and had to get back out, didn't play for two years. We've been through that, but I think he's just more comfortable. He's in a better place.

Q. Devyn Marble has started the last three games for the Orlando Magic. What does that do for your program, having that on his resumé now?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I couldn't be happier for him. He's one of my favorite guys I've ever coached. He's a great person to have in the locker room, on the road. In the summertime, he's in the gym, he's working. He was a great influence on the younger guys in terms of what he said but also kind of how he went about his business. He never got caught up in his own success, he just kind of kept working and kept a very low profile, and I think for him, he really kind of -- a lot of people want to play in the NBA. Pretty much everybody that's playing high school or college basketball wants to play in the NBA, but you've got to focus and you've got to have a plan, and you've got to go after it

every day, and that's what he did. And that's why I'm proud of him.

It's great for our program. But I look at it more like when I watch a young guy come in as a skinny freshman with a little bit of fanfare, not a lot, and just grind it and sort of determine his way into the NBA, I mean, I think that's what it's all about. For me as a coach, and I take great pride that I had anything at all to do with him getting there. I was just one small part of a lot of people that helped him get there.

Q. How much growth have you seen in Dom now that he's playing more minutes?

FRAN McCAFFERY: What you're seeing in him is a guy that's playing with more confidence. He's playing with great energy and I think a clearer understanding of what's necessary. So sometimes that's manifested in, okay, what does he have to do in terms of what defense and what offense are we running, but sometimes it's just, okay, you have to really compete now. This is a different animal than you've ever been involved with in your life, and you've got to get after it on the glass and you've got to get after it defensively and you've got to run the floor and you've got to thoroughly understand who is lining up in front of you and what that guy does, and I've just been really proud of how he's sort of plugged away at getting better and kept believing in himself.

Q. Is Brady shut down for the season?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's not shut down, he's just not going to play. He's going to continue to try to practice and things like that, but yeah, he's going to redshirt.

Q. What made the final decision?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think for him, from the minute he got here in June, he's not been 100 percent. He was hurt when he got here. He tried to get better, and then he got surgery, and then he tried to come back, and then he had a setback, and that was a long break, and then it still hurts. He was in terrible shape, which anybody would be if you sit for two months. So he's just trying to battle back and work with our trainers and our doctors, and I think next year he's going to be a really good player for us. I think it was the right move for him, and I think it was the right move for our program.

Q. After playing a couple of the quicker guards in the Big Ten the other night, playing Scott again (inaudible)?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't look at -- pretty much every team has somebody like -- has more than one person like that. You've got to be able to guard those guys. Maybe you're right, maybe that team, they put three smalls out there that are really hard to guard, and the difference with Minnesota sometimes is very few teams have three quick guards, all of whom can shoot threes. If all a guy does is put his head down and go, you can guard him one way, but if he can shoot 40 or better from three and he can go by you, that's a little bit tougher. That's why we were mixing zone, man, back and forth.

You're right, Scott is every bit as quick and shooting the ball well. He wasn't shooting it as much. He's shooting it a little bit more, and then you put Russell alongside him, those two guys are bigger. They're playing a lot of minutes, those two guys.

Q. Is Mike maybe playing his best basketball?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think he's been tremendous. He had a terrific game the other night. I think he was on his way to an even better game. He got in foul trouble, and thankfully Clemmons played well. But I think he's a very underrated defender. I think he's been defending well, pushing the ball hard, making good decisions, not turning it over, making enough baskets. He had a big three he had in the second half. He's playing well.

Q. Woodbury's contributions sometimes don't show up on the stat sheet. But the other night he had nine rebounds, which seemed to be a real important element throughout the game. Going up against Amir Williams, how important is that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's absolutely critical. Amir is a handful. His defense on Walker the other night was probably the best I've seen all year. He's been a 20 and 10 guy in a lot of games, and he limited his touches. He's going to have to do the same with Williams because if Williams can get in deep position he's going to turn and dunk the ball. He can get 15, 17 points that way. So Woody will work, Woody will bang with him, he'll move his feet, and hopefully do another great job like he did against Walker.

Q. The Big Ten is brutal as it is. How important are fast starts to conference play?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Every game is going to be one that challenges you in a lot of different ways because every team has got different weapons and every team plays a different style. But every team is capable of winning that game, no matter who you play. We're capable and the team we play is capable. And the same is true -- everybody is like, oh, we're surprised that Rutgers beat Wisconsin. Yeah, but Rutgers has really good players, and they've got an NBA coach, and they were at home, and that's what this league is.

They were asking me the other night about Minnesota, 0-5. You look at that team, and you say, they're really good. They lose our game in a tough fashion, they lose in overtime against Ohio State, they had leads in the second half in two road games. They could easily be 4-1. That's what this league is. You want to try to be prepared and win every game that you can. You're right, if you somehow could be 4-1, that would be tremendous, but you're every bit as concerned about the next game.

Like I said the other night, I said if 12 days from now, Minnesota was 5-5, would anybody be surprised? I wouldn't be.

Q. On the Ellingson situation, he's played I think seven games. Is there any reason he wouldn't get a redshirt? What's the rule there?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I'm not the guy that has the final say. Basically what happens is there's rules in terms of number of games you can play. It's 10 in the first half of the year. So if you split the year in half, depending on how many games you play, you play more than 10 games, no matter what happens, you've burned that year. It used to be essentially five, and then all of a sudden somebody gets hurt in the sixth game, then they want to appeal, and they finally said, okay, it's 10, that's it, no appeals. But there has to be legitimacy to it. It can't be the guy played in seven games in the first half, and oh, yeah, had that thing with my knee, and you're kind of making it up. This kid was in a boot all summer, then he had surgery, he's back in a boot. It's got to be all documented, and there's got to be legitimate medical personnel who say, you know what, this didn't work for this kid this year. So they have to sign off on it. They have to put their reputation on the line, and it's got to be

legitimate.

So knowing that it's legitimate and knowing that our doctors will do that, there's no reason to believe that it wouldn't be. But it still couldn't be. It still has to -- it's a case-by-case situation.

Q. Is it like the NCAA then evaluates what your doctors say?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. I'm trying to remember if it's the NCAA or the conference. I don't know which one. I think it's the NCAA. But we'll work through our compliance office and they'll -- our compliance office will work with our team physicians, and I'll be out of it.

Q. Can you talk about your working relationship with Sally Mason?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I'll never forget the first time I met her. Obviously, it was on my job interview, and I immediately liked her. I felt very comfortable, and it's the kind of person you want to work for. We were very similar philosophically in terms of where we saw this program going. She's been incredibly supportive of me and the entire department. I think about coming to work every day in the offices that we have, with the practice facility we have, and she was right in the middle of all that at a very difficult time in our University's history, coming after the flood and things like that. But she had a tremendous vision for everybody. Obviously athletics was a big part, and for her, she wants to win. But she made it very clear we're not cutting corners to do that, and I always admired her and respected her for that, but there was also a very personal side to her.

She maintained relationships with so many people in so many different departments, and for Margaret and I, moving across country, she was aware that it was a big move for our family, and when Patrick got sick, she was right in the middle of all that. Knowing what is on her plate every day and to have that kind of relationship is something that I will definitely miss. I will miss her and her leadership, her friendship, and I know she'll do great things moving forward.

Q. How difficult is it to beat a team twice in one season?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's hard to beat anybody once. It's really hard to beat them twice.

Q. How is Anthony handling coming off the bench?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Anthony understands -- everybody wants to start, right, but he's our backup point guard, and we need him to engineer the offense and to be a thinking man's player. You don't have to think as much at the 2 spot. Our team needed him to be that guy because if I started Mike and Anthony, they were both kind of ready to come out at the same time because of fatigue, and then one of them has got to stay and run the point, or we go to Trey. Trey is getting closer to being ready to be a guy that could impact our team. But right now he's behind Clemmons, who's behind Gesell, and we can play Pete. I think Pete is playing extremely well, and I think Josh is playing well. We've got five guards that can play, and four of them are playing most of the time.

Q. With this match can Thompson be athletically --

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, he's got an explosiveness that you really only see at the NBA level. He's always a threat for a lob. The thing I've been impressed with, he's shooting the ball better. He's really worked on that aspect of his game. He always had a solid handle, could get by you, could get to the rim and dunk it. Obviously he can get up and down the floor. He's making jumpers, he's really hard to guard. It used to be you could kind of back off him a little bit and stay between him and the basket and block him out and he'd have a chance. He's playing like a senior. He's doing for that team what they need him to do, and that's play like a senior captain. He's a handful.

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