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An Interview With:

COACH McCAFFERY

Q. Last week you had 30 points in the paint in two games and the previous week you had 80. Is there something that's happening offensively or defensively that's created that wide gap?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, in the zone, against Northwestern, we got it to the rim a number of times. Just didn't score. That was unfortunate. But, I think anybody who attacks the zone wants to mix it: jumpers, penetration, plays at the rim...

The Minnesota game, it was a little faster paced in terms of how they guarded us. It wasn't a concerted effort to go away from the paint. Obviously we want to go to the paint every game. We're going to try to drive the ball. We're going to drive the ball. We are going to try to throw it inside. Sometimes you throw it in and don't throw it back out and shoot jumpers, but we don't ever want to rely too much on jump shooting. I don't think any team does.

Q. You talked in the past about wanting guys to finish three-point plays at the rim, last couple games has not happened at much. Is there a certain technique they didn't apply; Adam a couple of times.

COACH McCAFFERY: No, I think he was really trying. He went hard a couple times. So did White. I thought they both went really hard a couple times. Didn't go in.

Q. What's the key to getting your transition game going?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, the more stops you get, starts with that. And then a concerted effort for your wings, in particular, to run. Your wings and your post have to run. The hard thing there is sometimes guys start leaking, because they know they want to get out and they want to run.

But you're playing against a team that offensive rebounds, that's problematic. I think you have to stay in and block them out and get the ball, and then run.

So we'll just keep trying to emphasize running and pushing it, and then sometimes you can push it down but there's nothing there. You want to make sure you make good decisions once you get there.

Q. Mack, he's had some good games --

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, Mack is an interesting player, because he's really creative. He's a hard cover one-on-one. They are going to set ball screens for him, so he'll have some space. He can really score and he's got three-point range, but he can drive it and dump it and create for others.

So you've got to really -- I think it starts with your defense getting back, because he'll attack you in transition and then it goes to ball screens, and sometimes it's nothing more than one-on-one contain.

He's one of those guys that ball screens help him but he really doesn't need a ball screen. He's pretty adept at attacking his man one-on-one, so you've got to be able to move your feet and contain him knowing he might pull up at any time. He's been known to get hot, too, four or five in a row on you from three. Tough cover.

Q. Gabe's minutes since he sprained his ankle -- does he cap out at a certain level?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, I think he should get more. It's nothing that we are deliberately doing. He's ready to go. So, you know, we went with the lineup, you go back to Sunday's game, that lineup that really got us the lead, that's the lineup that we stayed with. Pete didn't get as many minutes. Gabe didn't get as many minutes; neither did Clemmons.

Q. Does he just need to get in the flow a little bit more?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, he's doing fine.

Q. When you look at Aaron, obviously he was upset with himself the other day, 1-for-12, not a usual occurrence for him. What was it? He seemed at times to try to get to the line and didn't work out for whatever reason. What is he focused on?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think with him it's always going to be activity. He's going to score in a variety of ways. So the more chances he gets to get a little bit of space -- and what are other teams trying to do? They getting their defense back, they are trying to get underneath him and they are trying not to foul him. That's what they are doing.

I think he had a couple plays where the referees thought the defender was still and he thought he got fouled. They were tough, tough plays to judge. So I think what he's going to want to do is try not to put himself in those positions. I mean, he was all jammed up in there.

Now, he's got to get to the offensive glass. He's got to get out in transition. He's got to drive the ball and he's got to use his creativity and he's got great basketball IQ. I think if he does that, he'll still be able to get the ball to various locations. With him, he's going to score in different ways. It's not one or two ways he scores. I think people are trying to take away those two ways I mentioned but he's got other options to go to.

Now, I think what you'll see is you'll see him going stronger. He's just not going to go up and get a foul call. He's going to go and go through the guy and go around the guy, go over the guy, and just be that much more aggressive. And I think if he does that, he'll be better off.

Q. You talk about not getting stops. Is there one thing that's not happening or is it a combination?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, we got stops. You certainly want stops -- in certain situations, you want consecutive stops. We had a group that was playing pretty good D for a while and we had a group that wasn't playing such good D. I was more concerned with our defense -- or I should say our inability to defend the way I would have liked against Minnesota. Start of the game against Northwestern wasn't good. Wasn't a clear understanding of, should I help or not.

When you're playing a three-point shooting team, that's problematic. You don't want to go on the road and play a good three-point shooting team and give up six threes in the first half, that's not good. But I thought in the second half, we played pretty good defense, got us back in the game, got us the lead, put us in overtime.

That said, they still made some baskets. I think Demps and Macintosh are really good players. They made some good plays, when they needed them, and those two guys are tough, tough guys, tough late-game shotmakers.

Q. You talk about Mack; what are the challenges of this Rutgers team?

COACH McCAFFERY: A lot of challenges. And it starts with Mack and Kadeem Jack, he's terrific, and those guys are seniors, double-figure scorers and they have done it at this level for a long time. But they are athletic.

If you look at their lineup, their length, their size, their physicality; I think Daniels has really impressed me. I really like him. Etou I think is a really talented player. Lewis, when you get a big, strong post that can jump shoot the ball like he can. They are getting some play off the bench for him; Foreman is tough; Williams. They have got some guys that can score, and they can guard because of their length and their athleticism.

The other thing they do is they offensive rebound, and that's -- what we were talking about earlier, you want to run, you have to rebound the ball. And when they are really playing well, they are shooting it in the hole, their good players are making baskets and when they are not, they are going back to get it.

Q. How important is this stretch where you feel like you're playing your best basketball?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I think it's important for every team. But, for us, we've played

really well and there's times we haven't played as well offensively. You just want to start being as consistent as possible as you go down the stretch.

Q. Looking at Jarrod's performance the other day in the second half, four three-pointers, including one where he took the ball and shot and made it there with a couple minutes left, has he elevated himself into that position of being kind of the money scorer when you need him to? He did at Minnesota a couple months ago.

COACH McCAFFERY: He's just not a guy that rattles. He's going to shoot the same shot the beginning of the game as he's going to shoot at the end of the game. There's not much difference with him. I think that's a good quality to have.

It's not like he's doing anything different than he did at the start of the game. We put him in position to score. We throw him the ball, we find stuff for him all game long. We go to him. It's a concerted effort, one of our best shooters. Might be our best shooter.

But you look especially on his face, there's never any expression on his face, no matter what happens, good or bad, early, late. That's just the way he is. He's a very unique guy that way, and I think it's a really good quality to have. He doesn't seem to get caught up in anything, trash talking, crowd, noise, score, time, nothing really affects him.

Q. Has he always been that way as a person -- he was much more apprehensive last year as a shooter and would kind of defer to people and not really get into the flow of the game. What did you have to do with him discussion-wise?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I think that's a fair observation. I don't know that he was apprehensive. I think he -- I don't know that he was -- if you think about it, we always go to back to, he just didn't play for two years. I think not playing for two years, he was rusty. He was a little bit unsure.

He goes to college, he learns two offenses, doesn't play. Okay, what's a good shot; how does Coach want this play run; are we in motion; are we in sets; are we in transition mode. He was trying to put it all together in his mind, and you saw greatness, and you saw what I think would appear to be tentativeness at times.

I don't think you're seeing that this year because you're seeing a guy who is comfortable.

Remember, he was also coming off the bench last year, and starting this year, we're running more plays for him than we ever have, and he's confident in himself, his teammates are confident in him. He's not new. It's his third year in the program, even though it's his second year playing. He's essentially a senior, and then you have eligibility. I think when you put all those things together, it's more understandable that he'd be playing with more confidence now.

Q. Is he the type of guy like Matt Gatens three years ago, he was on a really hot stretch --

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, he could get on a roll like that, no question. He's got that shot-making ability that Matt had. I think, you know, in both cases, you want those guys to also get to the free throw line a little bit. We can post him up and pop him out and put him in screening action and give him the ball in different locations. Equally adept at making threes from the corner, the top, elbow, jumpers, shoots the floater, finger rolls. He's got an assortment of stuff offensively that's pretty tough to guard.

Q. You mentioned after the game that there's a few things that he could be doing better --

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, defensively, he relies, really, on his length, more so than being in a stance and getting over to help and understanding the importance of getting stops. He kind of floats and makes steals and gets deflections and blocked shots. He's always going to rebound. He's always done that.

So his effort level defensively is more, I kind of float around and rely on my instincts more so than staying in my stance and staying possibly where I need to be. That's where he's got to get better.

Offensively, he's not thinking the game sometimes like he should be. Goes back to everything else we said. He just kind of floats. And nothing rattles him, but there's some things he doesn't see; he'll lineup on the wrong side, so I'll go over on that side now. This is the way he is. He's not always going to be in the right place. But you know, he's one of those guys that when you need him out there, a lot of good things happen.

And I think going back to your question, I think when you look at his role this year in that

regard, I think it's a lot better for him. He's coming off the bench last year, playing behind Melsahn, Zach was playing a lot. You're interpreting that as tentativeness, but he's also not getting the same kind of minutes, not getting the same number of shots. Well, this year, he's getting all the minutes, all the shots; so it would stand to reason that he would be that much more comfortable.

Q. How much has Mike's elbow limited him?

COACH McCAFFERY: Doesn't seem like it's limited him that much, except from three-point range. I mean, he can't shoot three, he just can't. I mean, he can, but he struggles with that. His pull-up jumpers, money; his penetration, he's able to finish; he can get all the way to the rim. So I think for the most part, he's pretty effective.

Q. How does that maybe limit your offense a little bit knowing that whoever is defending him, he doesn't have to worry about the three-point shot?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think you would have to really analyze that throughout the course of the game and who is playing him completely differently as a result. But his shooting percentage, was just okay, anyway, prior to his injury. I think teams were playing him that way; as a driver, as a creator, as an intelligent point guard.

But I felt like, you know, he can't shoot threes. I think he can be a guy that can shoot 35, 36; not 31, 32 from three. Probably not going to happen today, but as his thing gets better, and it's getting better, I think we can get back to that.