

December 17, 2011



An Interview With:

FRAN McCAFFREY

Q. Fran, can you talk about Matt's defense? You really shut him down.

COACH McCAFFREY: I think the impressive thing is he shut him down and then got 20. I didn't take him out. He's in phenomenal condition to stay after -- I'm telling you, Simons is playing as well as anybody that's been on our schedule so far. That's how well he's playing, and they go to him. So you're going to be facing ball screens and cuts and misdirection and shuffle cuts.

So Matt had to really, really stay after him. I thought collectively, if you think about it, the one jumper he hit was in the zone when Bryce helped on penetration, and the other was a tip-in. So just a phenomenal job.

Q. As good an effort as your kids have had this year?

COACH McCAFFREY: Absolutely. It was a focused effort. It wasn't perfect, but it was hard fought at both ends. We executed when we had to. They have given some teams trouble with their pressure. So if they fall behind like they did, they come after you. They pressed. They got up. We handled the ball well against that.

We executed some of our sets down the stretch. We'd like to have done a little better job there, but we did keep getting to the free-throw line. When you're in the double bonus, that's what you want.

Q. Talk about the effort you got from Aaron White, especially coming out of the gate.

COACH McCAFFREY: Zach ends up with a cut under his eye, and Aaron goes right in and just was phenomenal. He was playing great in the second half too. I thought he got a little tired.

When I went back with Zach and Mel, I stuck with him in what was becoming a tighter game.

Once they got under ten, I went with my more experienced guys.

Q. Coach, five players in double figures. Is this the type of offensive output you've kind of been waiting for?

COACH McCAFFREY: Yeah, that's the kind of team I think we can be. Five guys in double figures. One guy with eight. Three other guys scoring. Makes us harder to prepare for, and it gives me flexibility depending upon what kind of game it is. And that game had kind of a unique flow to it.

Like I said, at the end, it was the experience. But in a lot of those runs -- you know, the one run in the first half, we had two freshmen, two sophomores on the floor. That was good to see.

Q. How about minutes for Bryce coming off the bench, he got 28.

COACH McCAFFREY: It was good to see him. I didn't see him favoring anything. I didn't see him struggling with fatigue.

It's not easy when you're running clock and then trying to run a set at the end of the clock and then protect the lead. So a couple of times it looked like he was out of sync and over dribbling. That's the difficult situation we put him in. I thought for the most part he executed ourself and got to the free-throw line and went 8 for 8. I'm really proud of him.

I'm happy for him because he's finally feeling like himself and obviously he's playing like himself.

Q. Coming off a tough loss, how big is it to have a senior like Matt come and play the way he did tonight on both ends of the floor?

COACH McCAFFREY: Well, you know,

his approach from minute one has been so incredibly professional, and he's very intuitive, and he knows we've been struggling. And he knows that, okay, it's his senior year. He's the captain. He's the senior. He's the guy. So much falls on him. He's just been terrific.

Tonight was really just an incredible performance, and that's what we need. We need him to be the steadying influence out there when I have so many young guys alongside of him. I trust him. I trust his decision making. I don't like to keep guys out there for 40 minutes, but I don't think there was one time where I looked at him and felt like he looked fatigued at all.

Q. For the game Monday, will you rest, or will you follow a normal practice schedule?

COACH McCAFFREY: We won't. We'll go regular practice, but we don't go real, real hard tomorrow.

Q. Break down a nonconference team you're not familiar with and you've got a short turnaround here Monday night.

COACH McCAFFREY: What we'll do, obviously, the next coach that has that is very familiar with them. So we'll have probably more meetings than we'll have time on the floor. So they'll have a meeting, practice, meeting. I might bring them back again, and then we'll have a meeting before the shootaround, a meeting at the meal.

They'll know what the game plan is, and they'll know personnel.

Q. Did you ever cross paths with Coach Williamson during his playing career?

COACH McCAFFREY: I recruited Corliss Williamson unsuccessfully at the University of Notre Dame. He was one of the best high school players I ever saw. He was a pretty good pro, but in high school he was virtually unstoppable and had an incredibly mature game. Total package. He had terrific grades. We tried to get him out of Arkansas.

Q. Was he an important recruit?

COACH McCAFFREY: I don't think so. I think I was actually.

Q. Talk about Marble. Two turnovers, ten points.

COACH McCAFFREY: He was terrific. He made the one mistake, and I blasted him. He missed a jumper, and he goes after it, and he fouls the guy. He didn't think, okay, we're 80 feet from the basket. They're in the bonus. You don't want to stop the clock and give them two points.

But he's just been great. Love him.

Thank you.

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