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An Interview With:

COACH McCAFFERY

Q. What are your first impressions of Indiana?

COACH McCAFFERY: I like Indiana's team. I think they are playing hard. Last night they were terrific and certainly the game before. They have done some different things. You know, tried some different lineups and tried some different things defensively. But they have got some good pieces, and I think that was evident, certainly, last night on the road at Wisconsin.

Q. Did you talk to Tom at all kind on how he's rebuilt his team or tried to rebuild his team?

COACH McCAFFERY: No. No. I didn't.

Q. Where do you feel you guys are at right now? The losing can wear on the kids sometimes.

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it can wear on you if you let it. I don't let it. We just keep plugging forward. As long as I feel like my guys are coming with a great attitude every day, working hard, trying to get better, trying to listen to what we ask them to do, trying to follow the game plan; then I feel like we are making progress.

And sometimes, you don't play well. Sometimes you play fair and lose to a really good team, but the reality is, the attitude in the locker room is still really good. And the approach from myself and the entire coaching staff is very positive and it will remain positive.

Q. To follow with that, you haven't noticed that the loss is maybe taking more of a toll on the players as you feel that they should be?

COACH McCAFFERY: It has not appeared to me that they are giving me anything less; that they are getting down on themselves.

I think you can look and say, well, you know, a person player might have a bad game and say, you know, is he down or whatever. I haven't felt that. I think we are just playing good teams with good players. And if one of my guys has an off-night, it's probably because he's getting beat up more so than he doesn't feel right. He's trying. He's battling.

Q. Where is this team improving right now, beyond wins and losses?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think we are improving in a couple areas. No. 1 we are getting production from a lot of different people. That's a good thing. Obviously, the problem then becomes, it doesn't seem to be on the same nights. How do you explain Eric May's performance on Sunday versus Wednesday, and the same for Andrew Brommer. But Andrew doesn't make a basket on Sunday, and he plays Sullinger toe-to-toe.

Eric May looks like a first-team all league player at Minnesota, doesn't get a basket Wednesday night. So obviously, the hope is that we can get all of these guys playing as well as they can at the same time. And sometimes it's a function of minutes.

And I have to force myself, in particular with Andrew more so than Eric to give him the kind of minutes that he needs to settle down. But when he's playing with that kind of energy level, there's very few players his size that have his skill set. For him it's always been sort of a function of confidence.

Same with Eric. When he's in an aggressive mode and hitting shots and driving shots to the basket in the passing lane and making steals, then he impacts the game at both ends. If he's going east/west and laying back then he's a non-factor.

We have to get those guys playing with that energy level at the same time, and along with the other guys who I think are coming. I think Basabe is coming, every night. He still plays like a freshman at times, but he is a guy that he just shows you a different move. I mean, the up and under move Wednesday night, he wouldn't have made that move two months ago. Shows to the lane, steps back through it, doesn't travel, left-handed lay-up, the catch and finish on the break. He is just scratching the surface of how good he can be.

I think Cartwright has been solid. We're killing the kid but he keeps coming, has a great attitude. I think it's been tougher format because he's getting closely guarded everywhere we play.

So Marble, we have to get going, he's too good of a player. I have to make sure I get him enough minutes to get in there. I thought he had one of those games Wednesday night where when I walked off the floor, I didn't think he played well. But when I watched the film, he played pretty well. He didn't have many points as he gets a lot of times but I thought Marble was pretty good. That left-handed pass he made on the break to Basabe, we don't have anybody else could make that pass. So that shows me he's got a lot in his game.

Q. Marble being your back-up point guard, does that hurt his development?

COACH McCAFFERY: No question. No question. And to his credit he doesn't complain about it. He doesn't whine. If I put him at the one, he plays at the one. If I put him at the two he plays at the two. I think it's incumbent upon me to get him more minutes at the two so he can eventually develop where he's going to be, the two, three.

The other thing he does, he rebounds, when he's on the floor, no matter what position he's playing, he rebounds and we need that from him.

Q. It seems like at times he hesitates when he gets the ball on his hands in the perimeter and waits for it the defender to get to him.

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that's an accurate observation. He's trying to do, what we ask him to do. He's trying to do what he thinks is right for the team and he's trying to do what he thinks is right for him. In the motion game, sometimes you catch the ball and you rip and go. Sometimes you wait. You catch, turn and face, and you read the post and you read the weak side

and where is the defender playing me, where is the defender playing the post, are they hugging the weak side or are they off in the lane and sort of calculate your next move.

I think he's trying to assess and then ultimately make the right decision, and right now, he's a little bit in between. He seems to be caught, and I think that's why you're seeing him play a little more east/west and a little less north and south, which we need him just attacking that rim like he did on Sunday. So I think ultimately, he'll be fine. He just has to get over the last one.

Q. Game two, just up and down --

COACH McCAFFERY: The thing about McCabe, he came off the bench and picked us up. We were struggling offensively. We had another one of those stretches where we weren't making baskets and he comes in, he makes a back-cut layup, Brommer hits him, hits a three, he's on his way.

He sometimes recognizes that we are struggling and feels like it's incumbent upon him to make a play, and then he forces it. He spins in traffic and turns it over. And then he gets down on himself like a lot of freshmen.

So I think the key for him is not to get down on himself and not to spin in traffic to begin with but when he does make a mistake, to go back the next play and not get hung up on him.

Q. I know it has not been discussed much, but how much is that trickle from Cully not being here?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think when you have Cully as our point guard, it's a different kind of player there. He's going to get in the lane and he's going to find Gatens and he's going to find Eric May. He's looking to help his teammates out more so than score for himself. I'm not saying Bryce doesn't do that, he does, but Bryce, he's trying to make plays and he's trying to make baskets, as well. I think he's our second-leading scorer.

I think having Cully with Bryce would have been nice, too, to be able to have Bryce play some off-guard and penetrate and give us some different options.

So he's not here. So we go with what we've got.

Q. Has losing Cully made you reassess and look more at a guard in the spring?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, we are looking hard at guards. We have two left. And you know, you never know. You're going to take the best available. We'll ultimately take the best available regardless of position but in a perfect world you take a guard and a big.

Q. Would you go possibly two?

COACH McCAFFERY: Possibly. Possibly.

Q. How do you teach the consistency aspect?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think there's a couple of things you can do. No. 1, you don't stop teaching. So if one of our guys has a bad game, we break the film down and we show it to them. This is what you did and this is what you could have done and this is maybe what you didn't see. So you didn't stop teaching and you don't make it about anything more than that, questioning their manhood and screaming and yelling doesn't really turn anything into a positive then.

They have to keep believing in me that I believe in them and that I can help them get better. That's how I've had success in the past with guys who are struggling. You know, somehow, some way, I have to get the good players out of the funk, if they are in a funk, and if they are playing well, then say and do the necessary things to make sure they continue to play well.

When Matt was struggling early it, was a function of his thumb but he couldn't make a shot. Okay. What can I do to help you? We run more sets for you, we run more motion. We can use you more as a back picker. We can post you up more. There's any number of things we can try to do and feel like we are working through this thing together, rather than I'm yelling at him and he's got to get it figured out, or else I'm going to replace him in the lineup.

I don't think that helps at all. Eric May was really struggling before the Minnesota game. I think he was worried I'm going to yank him out of the starting lineup. I said, look, I'm sticking with you, you're my guy, stay in there, just keep fighting, and he has a great game and then turns around and has another stinker. So now he's got to figure out, okay, what do I have to make sure I have more of those kinds of games that I had against Xavier and Minnesota versus Ohio State.

Q. This may be a dumb question, but is it harder when the team is struggling at the present time? Does it change anything you do?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I can tell you it's a lot easier when you're first in your Conference. Having been there, I can tell you that.

But the one thing that I found over the years, and I think you can look at a lot of programs, the difference between who is first and who is near the bottom is a lot smaller than what might appear. You look at a record and say, well, you know, Ohio State is 19-0 and we are not. They are light years ahead of us.

You know, we had them here. We had them. We didn't win, but we were right there. And we have got a young team, and we have got scholarships out there, and we'll be at it next year.

So a lot of times, it's one or two players that can turn it for you in basketball. I always think it's a lot harder in football, 85 guys, 22 starters. I can remember, you know, when I was at Lehigh, five winning seasons in 65 years. Generally considered the worst Division I job in college basketball. Daren Queenan comes to Lehigh, scores 2,700 points, all of a sudden we are good and I'm a lot better coach.

He made shots at the end of the game that nobody else could make, and all of those five-point losses became three-point wins. So I think the thing for us is to make sure that we continue to play the kind of games we played against Illinois and Ohio State here and fewer of the ones like we played the other night where we lose by 20.

Q. Talked about the psychology of coaching, guys overanalyzing versus relaxing and playing the game, is that a fine line or is it different with each kid?

COACH McCAFFERY: It's different with each kid, yeah. Every kid is wired differently. And you know, if I can figure out, why Andrew Brommer gets down on himself more than somebody else does, I mean, I said to him the other night after the game, I said, that kid is going to be the first pick of the draft and put your stat line next to his, on the road. He took four charges, had 12-6, three blocks, positive assist turnover ratio. He hit 13-9, no blocks no, charges.

Now, granted, there's a reason why he's still going to be the first pick and Andrew is not, but if you can out play him on any given day then you

can be a really effective player in this league, which he has been. Remember how he was against Iowa State, he was tremendous. Then he comes in and misses a layup and then he's ready to kill himself. You know, I'm going to leave you in there and let you relax a little bit but you have to show me that you have a little confidence in yourself, too.

That block he made, late, that was an unbelievable play. Very few people can make that play, come from the weak side, time it, block it at the top of the square and then pick it up and outlet it, that is a big-time play. And that's what I'm trying to get him to do, and little by little, I think he's starting to believe in himself. So I have to coach him differently than I'm coaching somebody else.

Some guys, you ignore them. I had a guy last year, I didn't say a word to him. I didn't say a word to him for four years. "How you doing, Eddie?"

"Good." That was it. Scored 3,000 points, won three championships, scored 27 in the final game. Good; that was it. (Laughter).

So everybody's different.

Q. Changing the starting lineup?

COACH McCAFFERY: No.

Q. Mentioned earlier that teams pay a lot of attention to Matt Gatens, what else are you discovering that teams do when they game plan?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, it's changed. You know, in the beginning, particularly with the Big Ten part of the schedule, they were pressing up on our perimeter guys, Cartwright, May, and Gatens. I think that helped Basabe get going. Now they are starting to scheme Basabe differently. And to his credit, he's adjusting now. So I think, you know, you look at our -- every coach is going to look at the numbers, where are the points coming from, where are the shots coming from.

Still we have the bulk of our double figure scorers are on the perimeter so they are still going to defend the perimeter. They are going to press up on Bryce knowing that our backup is a two, who is doing fairly well, but you know, not only are you trying to get to our backup, you're trying to wear Bryce down so he can't make plays at the end of the game or the end of the shot clock.

And then, obviously, they are paying some attention to Basabe now. So whereas he had single coverage, now they are running at him and

they are doing some things to him. They see him get 22-13, 20-13, the other night he had 11, 12 rebounds, so he's putting up numbers. But he's shown that he can pick-and-pop and hit a three.

I don't think anybody thought he could pick-and-pop and hit a three after our first ten, 12 games. Now we are running stuff where he's a pick-and-pop guy and he's a catch and rip four man. Now you have to think twice about who you put on him. You can put a big, strong guy on him and mug him, and neutralize him, you know, five, six weeks ago. Now, he's going to rip and murder that guy.

So I think as our team has progressed, I think teams have changed how they scheme against us.

Q. You mentioned minutes against Cartwright, does that make you hesitate to run a full-court press?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yes, for extended periods of time. I would like to press more. We pressed obviously more in the second half, when we got down, against Ohio State and had success with it. You know, I've always had a sort of pressing team. I've had my guys, that, okay, let's go get them.

The four or five quicker guys that you have, face guard deny, double in the backcourt, rotate; that takes speed and quickness, but also it takes savvy and understanding of when do I go, when do I wait. He turned his back and I shoot the gap; he didn't turn his back, I fake and comeback. I would like to play more like that, we just don't have the guys like that.

Q. The fact Basabe has emerged, they see a kid come out here?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it's important for a lot of reasons that Basabe have a good experience. He's got to play well. He's got to get some publicity, but he's also got to assimilate academically, and socially. And he's got to be able to say, you know what, yeah, the basketball side is great, but you know what, the Iowa experience is terrific. The entire experience, because a lot of times you'll get a big city kid that might say, wow, they are in the Big Ten and I like coaches style, but I don't want to go in school in Iowa. Melsahn can say, it's great, it's great to go to school in Iowa, great place, terrific friends, we travel, everything you would want, I'm able to focus. And there is

enough things to do.

But I'll be honest with you, you're seeing a lot -- when I first got into the business, kids talked more about social life than they talk about now. Now they want a positive experience on the court and in the classroom more so than ever I think.

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