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An Interview With:

FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. Fran, you said that this is Aaron White's team. Can you expand on what you mean by that?

COACH McCAFFERY: There's always one player that sort of becomes the identity of the team. For me, you've heard me say this a lot, it was Jarryd Cole's team, it was Matt Gatens' team, it was Roy Devyn Marble's team, and now it's Aaron White's team.

That said, we have seven upperclassmen. So I expect there to be a lot more leadership coming from other folks besides Aaron. But he's the guy that has established himself as a player.

He's also established himself in terms of work ethic. He's also the guy that will speak up. You can have a leader by example but it helps if that guy is your hardest worker, but also communicates well and is received well by the other players, in particular, the young players.

We have a really good mix of that upperclassmen group, that seven guys and then three newcomers and Peter Jok. So we've got great mentors for those young guys.

Q. What do you envision for Jarrod Uthoff? Do you envision him taking a larger role in offense?

COACH McCAFFERY: Absolutely. He's a guy that, I think you saw it last year in certain games he was phenomenal. I don't think it's easy, sitting out two years and then playing half the game, for him I think extended playing time, getting a little more comfortable now, you'll see him play completely differently.

He's a mature guy now. This is his fourth year in college. He's much stronger. He's been around. But he still only played one year. So this year now he's going to obviously have a chance to start.

And I would expect him to be a starter and play both positions, the 3 and the 4. I want him to be aggressive offensively. That will be key for him and for us.

When he was aggressive last year, we were a better team. And there were times when he just was kind of feeling his way out there and that's to be expected for a guy who didn't play for two years.

What you'll see is a guy who is playing more, is expected to do more, and has an even greater expectation of himself.

Q. Where are you at with Peter Jok, as far as the stuff that he went through in the offseason?

COACH McCAFFERY: You know, I have addressed that. He's good to go.

Q. Coach, a lot of guys pretty much in rotation. Are you going to go that deep? Are you going to shorten it up, have you thought about that?

COACH McCAFFERY: I expect to go that deep again, Rick. It's a combination of things. Sometimes you say is it too cumbersome, is it fair to everybody? At the same time you have guys who deserve playing time.

As the season got down, towards the end, we trimmed some minutes from some guys. They were still playing. You look back and say, okay, what do we have 11 guys averaging at least 10 minutes a game, that's rare.

We have 11 players capable of doing that again. I will say this: It was more manageable before Josh came back. We were trying to get 10 in there. And that was easier to do than 11. 11's a

lot harder. So we'll see how that goes.

I don't expect it to be a short bench like eight. It will be closer to 11.

Q. What are your expectations for your newcomers this year?

COACH McCAFFERY: Newcomer expectations: If you look at it, Dom Uhl has to play a lot. We lose Basabe. We lose McCabe. Who is that next forward in the game at that position? Obviously you have Aaron White. Jarrod Uthoff. So I think Dom is the guy.

Doesn't mean we can't play Pete and Josh at the wing positions. It doesn't mean that we can't play Trey Dickerson, for example, to go a little further into your question. He's the guy that's different. The reason why we brought him in, he's different than everything else we have. He's a creator. He's great in the pick-and-roll. He can score.

He loads people up. So if you have shooters on the floor, like, for example, if he was on the floor with Pete and Josh and Jarrod, he's going to find those guys for open shots. If you have your longer athletic lineup, he's going to be able to penetrate in the lane, find guys near the basket, throw alley-oop passes up near the rim.

The break will run really well as a result. So we've got some options there with Trey as a scoring 1 and a creative 1. Brady Ellingson is going to be a factor. How does he feel? He had the foot surgery in the offseason. He's doing pretty well. He's not 100 percent. We'll see how that goes.

We'll see with Pete and Josh, you know, do we have enough minutes for him? Because I will tell you this, in the workouts that I've watched, that we've had with him, he knows how to play. And he's a really effective player, really good shooter, but incredibly smart and kind of a winning player, which is what we thought we had when we signed him.

So he could be a guy that ends up right in the middle of it.

Q. Do you think your versatility is a blessing and curse in that it gives you a lot of different options but it's hard to find a rhythm and find the right guy at the right time to play?

COACH McCAFFERY: It's a challenge, no question. But at the same time it helps you absorb a long season and helps you absorb injury at any particular time. As you know, it's a marathon,

especially in this league, especially with our non-conference schedule.

So I think you need that number of bodies. You need to have that many guys ready to play. And every game is different. When you play Wisconsin, it's different than when you play Michigan. Michigan State. Every team in our league top to bottom as you know is the strongest of anybody in the country. So when we've got new teams coming in, some teams will play more zone. Some will press more. Some will be straight half court man and you need different combinations and different weapons against those teams at any given time.

Q. Will this team go as far as the guard corps takes them, do you think?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think you could say that about every team. I feel very good about our guards and feel very good about our front court guys. But your ability to win close games is usually more a function of guard play than anything else.

Q. Talked about playing the two bigs together. Oglesby and Woodbury. Iowa has had a history of twin powers. Is it more difficult to do that with the shot clock and the 3-point line in today's world?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that's a factor. I really do. Do you have enough weapons out there, if you play the two bigs together. You have seen a lot more four guards, four guard rotations. Can you play two bigs if they're playing four guards?

You look at Michigan last year. They got to the Elite Eight and essentially played four guards. But at the same time now they've got to guard us. So we can throw the ball inside. But with that lineup will you be getting enough 3s?

But I'll say this, I think with where Woodbury's offense has gotten and where Gabe's offense has gotten, it's much more likely because you're playing two guys that are capable of getting double figures.

Whereas if that was not the case, then I don't think you could play them both together.

Q. You were blessed with a lot of good vocal leadership your first couple of years from Jarryd Cole, Eric May and Matt Gatens. Last year the guy who felt they weren't the vocal type. Do you think that had an impact on not

being able to right the ship late, and do you think this year's program maybe has more of that vocal leadership in its upperclassmen?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, I don't think that was it, Scott. We didn't defend. If you look at our performances down the stretch, and we're sitting there at 19-6 and lost a bunch late. Okay, who did we lose to we lost at Minnesota, at Indiana, at Michigan State and Wisconsin at home. They're very difficult games.

Every one was in the balance. But we give up 95 in Minnesota. We scored 89. But you gotta stop people especially on the road. And you could say, well, okay, was the leadership a factor in it? You could argue it, I guess. But the reality is we didn't defend the way we need to defend to consistently win. That's why we were 9 - 9 and not better than that. And I think that's gotta be the challenge for this team.

Now, will leadership play a part in that, absolutely. Aaron's going to be right in the middle of it. If he's talking about it, then he has to do it defensively. He's always been an offensive player. He steals the ball. He's a terrific rebounder. But can he be a lock-down defender, especially if he's playing the 3 spot? He might be matched up against the tough cover at 6'4", 6'5". I think it's a combination of things.

Q. You always talk about point guard play ...

COACH McCAFFERY: Point guard play will be an interesting situation. When you have your starting point guard back, it's not usually a discussion. But when you sign a Junior College All-American and you have Mike Gesell, who is capable of playing the 2, then it becomes a discussion.

I think the guy that nobody is talking about and a guy we probably should be talking about is Anthony Clemmons. Very few people handle what he went through last year the way he did. Most people would just transfer. I didn't play him as much. He didn't play as much or as well. Nine out of ten kids today blames everybody else.

And he took full responsibility and ownership of the season he had, which was unexpected based on how he played when he was a freshman.

So there's only one way to handle that, and that's to go out and work that much harder in the offseason, which he did. He's in phenomenal shape. Great summer in the Prime Time League, really. I think he was MVP. And I think when you

see him you'll notice a difference. He's leaner. He's more explosive. And he's playing like an experienced veteran should play.

And I'm excited about him. So you've got a lot of candidates there that can play that position. But that again gives us even that much versatility, I think.

Q. Is Woodbury building on the Tennessee game?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think Woodbury is really playing well. I think his confidence is at an all-time high. He's in great shape. You look at him physically he's strong but he's still running, still moving his feet, still aggressive. Much more comfortable offensively. And I think you'll see a guy that is really looked upon to score the ball more than he's ever been.

Q. Is Mike Gesell ready to become kind of the main man in the back court and comfortable in that role both handling the ball?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that's a key question to ask. From where I sit, I'd say yes, he is. And the reality is we need him to be that guy. Marble is not here anymore. We need you to consistently score the ball at above 10 points a game.

He's always been right around there, eight, nine, 10. Can he be a 15-point scorer? He certainly, I think, has the capability. I think when he's the point guard he does look to shoot the ball less. And when I move him over, he's more aggressive, shooting 3s, attacking the rim, shooting his ball up. We have to figure that out. If he's going to be the point I still want him thinking offensively to be aggressive. But he will play in the 2 spot some. I'll play Trey. I'll play Clemmons there, and I'll usually move him over.

Q. You look at Jarrod as both a guy who can shoot the perimeter shot and put it on the floor. Where will he be on the offense, will he be expected to do both?

COACH McCAFFERY: He'll be expected to do both. The funny thing about Jarrod is I consistently want him to shoot more than he does. And you usually don't have that fight with anybody. Usually it's tone it down, be a little more selective. Let's move the ball. Let's change the sides of the floor get the defense moving.

But I have enough confidence in his ability

to shoot the basketball, I want him to shoot the ball every time he's open. And sometimes what he'll do is he'll turn that down. He'll drive into traffic and try to make a play from there. That's what I'm trying to get him to avoid.

If you're open, shoot the ball. You've got the green light. And I think what will happen is he'll be more comfortable in his role because he's going to play more like I said before. So he'll be able to miss three or four in a row.

Always felt like if Aaron's going to come back in or Mel's going to come back in -- but as you know, you've watched me, I don't coach that way. If I give you the green light, just keep shooting. I don't care if you miss three or four in a row, because I think you're a good shooter. He's going to be a guy that's going to be a 50 percent shooter anyway.

And I think he has the potential to be a 50 percent shooter from the field, 40 from 3, 80 from the line, which is a guy that you want shooting the ball. You want him shooting a lot.

Q. As the director of this program, you've made steps each year in your four years, where are you guys at now and where does it go from here? Is it maintaining this level?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think obviously we had a lot of work to do four years ago. And we got to work and made great improvements. Our fan base became reengaged and that's been a big help to our program. We've got more exposure on the television level that is going to help manifest itself in a lot of different ways. So I think what you hope to do is continue to improve.

Now, the reality is you get to a certain point, that becomes a lot harder because there are a lot of BCS teams that view themselves as top 25 programs. And what are there, 65 BCS schools? So there's 40 that aren't. So that's the challenge before us, to continue to recruit, continue to coach and make sure we have enough talent, enough depth to succeed in the toughest part of the country.

I feel very good about where we are, but you never -- you don't ever develop any level of complacency like we've arrived, you've never arrived. You're constantly trying to improve what you already have and improve what's here.

I think that's the kind of the players that we've gotten. We don't have any McDonald's All-Americans. So the guys we're getting are

typically going to be four-year guys that have character, work hard and improve.

Eventually maybe we'll get a guy like that or two and if that happens that will be great. But up until then, you know, I'm satisfied with what we have and where we are.

Q. Maybe outside of Wisconsin, you have possibly the best front wall returning in the Big Ten with your duo centers and what you have there in White and Jarrod. What expectations do you have for them this year? Do you expect them to take more of a leading role, where (indiscernible) took the team on last year?

COACH McCAFFERY: We have two seniors and two juniors. And obviously Woodbury is a two-year starter and Jarrod's a very experienced junior. So you're right, we have two 6'9", 6'9" and 7'1". Those guys have been around. They're very confident.

And I think what you'll see is all four of those guys being different this year. And we're going to need them to be like that. So if in fact Wisconsin is going to go back, everybody's got them going to the Final Four again, if in fact that group is going to be the second best group in our league, and I'm sure they would say you know what we think we could be the best, that's what you want.

You want them to aspire to be the best. It's a big challenge, because there's some other teams in this league that have really good 4s and 5s. So it's a big challenge. And they know it. And we're going to be counting on them quite a bit.

Q. Coach, last offseason you guys did a lot of extra work, traveled a little bit. But maybe ran out of gas towards the end of the season. Do you think that affected the team, the work they did in October and before, or did you maybe change your plan this offseason?

COACH McCAFFERY: The only thing we did differently is obviously we didn't go overseas. I thought, to be honest with you, that the overseas trip was good for us last year.

The reason being, Peter Jok got to play and Jarrod Uthoff got to play. They wouldn't have got to play otherwise. They got to play six games. And I thought it was great for Gabe. He really took a jump. I thought it was great for Woodbury.

So I don't know, again, I mean, how you

want to phrase it. I don't think we ran out of gas. We got away from defending the way we should be defending. Was that fatigue? It shouldn't be, because we were playing 11. I will say this, if anybody was tired last year, it would have been White and Marble because their minutes dramatically increased if you look at the numbers. They were averaging about 30 and then all of a sudden it goes to 36.

I left them on the floor. If I had to do it over again I probably would have rested those two guys a little bit more if I were to analyze it and be honest with myself.

But everybody else was still playing about the same. I didn't think we had tired personnel. I thought we relied too much. We were scoring the ball so well, go to 19 and 6, I thought we relied too much on our offense.

And we were a good offensive team, and we were still a good offensive team, even in defeat. We just weren't good enough defensively.

Q. I know you have your own luck in sports and that's typical, but you've had a lot of close games in the last two years. But at some point you have to stop and take inventory and wonder have you just been a little bit more unfortunate than you'd like to be the last couple of years?

COACH McCAFFERY: There were a couple of games where that would stick out. But I think you look at this league, all right, and sometimes certain teams get dismissed, but you forget that Penn State beat Ohio State twice last year. One of the toughest road wins we had all year was at Penn State.

We beat Northwestern twice and lost to them in the tournament. They made a ton of 3s. But they had good players. Penn State has good players. That's what this league is. You're going to be in close games. And there was a question a minute ago about guard play. And that's where guard play really manifests itself is in close games. You make your free throws late, you don't turn it over, you have a shot every time down the floor, are you getting the ball to the right people? Do you understand time and score?

And so I think you look at this team, we certainly had the experience to be able to make those decisions and able to help us in tight games.

Q. You made a couple of references to defense. How basically -- those four guys, how do you improve the defense?

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COACH McCAFFERY: I think in a couple of ways. Obviously you look at did we play too much man? Did we play too much zone? Did we play not enough of one? Should we press more? Press less? You analyze that.

Then you look at rebounding. We were a much better rebounding team in the last two years than the previous two. And that is one of the reasons why we won 25 and 20, because we couldn't continue to rebound the ball the way we were and expect to win 20 games.

So then it comes down to, okay, breakdown your practice. How much time do you spend on offense, how much time do you spend on defense? And how much of a premium to put on it. How much premium do you put on blocking out, you do blackout drills? I've always been kind of the school of thought go rebound the ball. The ball comes off the rim go get it. Not worry about blocking out and pivoting and having your arms here, your foot there. That sucker comes off the rim, go get it and then run to the other end of the floor in a pack.

When you're playing teams that are downshifting with smaller lineups, they've got a quickness, flying to the glass too. Gotta put a body on somebody. Put more premium on that. Those are things that you break down that you analyze and say, okay, what can we do, maybe improve it here a little bit and here a little bit and here a little bit and here a little bit. And ultimately you've improved it to the level that really makes a difference.

Q. Probably the most difficult non-conference schedule play, how do you navigate that?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know that there's a formula to navigate that. I think what you have to do is make a decision, do you want to do that? Do you think that this team has the mental toughness that would enable them to handle that kind of schedule knowing what comes behind it, which is 18 monsters? Okay.

Now you know you have the ACC Big Ten challenge. You know you're going to play in a high profile tournament. But we wanted our team in Madison Square Garden. We wanted our team on national TV, to go to Carolina and play is going to be a great opportunity for our program.

We know what the Iowa State game is and what the Northern Iowa game is. Both of those

teams are going to be spectacular this year. They'll have great interest, but they will challenge our team in many different ways.

But we also looked at the other teams on our schedule to try to be aware of RPI. You've gotta be smart. You can't take them all on, you have to look and say, okay, do we maybe not play a bottom .350, bottom .300, you get .150 to .200, and that could impact your eventual RPI and determine what happens on Selection Sunday.

So what happened to us a couple of years ago when I thought we deserved to be in and we weren't in, it was all non-conference schedule. So last year and this year we said let's go take them on. And I do think it can backfire on you, but I do think knowing what comes behind it, I think you're better prepared playing a difficult non-conference schedule than you would be otherwise.

Q. You have a freshman with ties to England. Is there a boos that these guys can give you because they are from a foreign country?

COACH McCaffery: I guess that's possible. International recruiting is a strange animal. Typically it's connections. It's relationships.

In both cases, we essentially recruited those foreign players off of American high school teams. It was my connections with Dom Uhl's AAU organization that helped us more than anything. We didn't know anybody in Germany that really was impacting him.

The same thing with Gabe, we went over there to recruit one of his teammates, fell in love with him. He fell in love with the program. They were just honest people and gave us a shot to recruit him, say come on in.

When you see that sort of pipeline to certain programs that have a lot of foreign players, it's typically relationship-driven. There's some connection. There's a foreign coach on the staff or the head coach knows certain people in a certain country.

But I do think generally when you have players from a foreign country that have success, others are willing to follow, they know that, okay, the path is open for me to be successful there.

Q. What's the policy on Twitter and social media going into the season?

COACH McCaffery: Our guys can tweet. They can do whatever they want to do. What we did over the summer we brought a

company in and kind of went through it with them and it was a training session, a training seminar that I think was very well received by our players.

Because you get to a point in my chair, the simple thing is no Twitter, no Facebook, none of this stuff. Is that realistic? I mean, that's just sort of how young people communicate. That's how they live their lives. So I think it's better to educate and allow them the flexibility but ultimately you have to trust them.

Now, if we have another issue, then I'll shut it down. I did it last year, I'll do it again. But I think from that point forward our guys have done a really professional job of what they say that ultimately becomes available to anybody that wants to see it.

Q. Is the season too long... another six weeks, this could conceivably go until April. Hasn't it been too long?

COACH McCaffery: I think it's a legitimate question because it's different. Normally if you think back 10 years ago, there was always that great anticipation of October 15th, the first day of practice. You're going to have practice at midnight, are you going to practice just regular. And you sort of have been away from your guys for a while.

That's not the case anymore. We were practicing in June. We were practicing in July. We were practicing in August. We've had practice in September. Now, it's much smaller scale. It's two hours a week. But then they live -- so they're together. So you could argue that.

But the reality is the guys are going to be in the gym anyway, they're going to be in the weight room anyway. So it was imperative that we have access. And if it's two hours a week, it's two hours we have with our guys that are going to be structured, and it's six hours a week with our strength and conditioning people, that's structured, where they're lifting the right way and there's not going to be back injuries or knee injuries.

So you want to argue that it's too long, that's a legitimate argument. However, everybody's kind of doing the same thing. So the only other option you have is you decide, okay, you know what, they come back and the third week of August, I'm not going to look at you. I'm not going to see you until October 6.

You guys go condition on your own and is that realistic? That all of a sudden you have



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people that shouldn't be talking to the guys talking to the guys. And that's ultimately why the NCAA changed the rule and allowed us access in the summer because the agents took over, and they're essentially recruiting our own players off our campus.

So I think we probably have the best model that there is now. But the one thing that I'm always cognizant of is how healthy are our guys and how explosive are they. If we worked them so hard they have no legs, are they tired? So we do a lot of stuff. But we temper it at this point of the year. We're trying to grow to where we're peaking at the right time.

Q. I know starting lineups are more interesting for us and probably for the fans than they are for you; you're more about minutes. Where do you see right now as the 2 spot? Is that a completely open competition between the starters, or do you envision a plan right now?

COACH McCAFFERY: I would say it's an open spot. I think you look at it two ways. Obviously Josh and Pete. That will be the logical place to start. Both of them are established. Josh being the senior. Pete being a sophomore.

Trey Dickerson would be a guy you look at. Okay, do you play him? Do you move Mike over? And you can't discount Anthony Clemmons in the mix. Because he's got enough versatility, he can guard a bigger guy, guard a smaller guy.

So it really is an open opportunity for any one of those guys.

Q. Will Mike still be a point guard in an open game?

COACH McCAFFERY: That's where I see it right now. But that could change between now and the first game.

Q. Are you looking to see Peter Jok step up defensively?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it was a couple of things. Last year, defense was one of them. But I think conditioning was the other. You look at the Tennessee game, I played him 16 minutes. I think he had 16 points. And a lot of people thought I kept yanking him because he wasn't doing what he was supposed to do defensively. He was actually pretty good. He was gassed. So for him, if he wants to be a starter, wants to play starter's minutes he's got to be in the best shape of his life. And I think he's really

worked hard at that this summer. I think you'll see that he's a lot leaner.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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