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An Interview With:

FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. Aaron White's upside, it doesn't seem like his body is even caught up with his game, Coach. It was phenomenal on the last.

COACH McCAFFERY I think that's a good point. I think the most impressive thing to me is just his understanding of what was needed in a very difficult game. We played a team that had a terrific game plan. They executed it to perfection. I think they showed everybody what they were made of.

They go on the road and win a road game coming from behind with their best player going 0 for 9. That tells me all I need to know about the team we played today.

So we get behind, and somebody's got to step up and play the way that he played. He had a couple of turnovers, but you just felt like he was going to get a rebound, get a basket, hit a three, block a shot, do something that we needed him to do.

Then you look down, and it's like, wow, he's got 20 and 15, pretty good day.

Q. You got 25 minutes off the bench from Anthony Clemmons. How much of a tone do you feel he was able to set for you guys at both ends of the floor?

COACH McCAFFERY: He was tremendous at both ends. He hit a huge three, obviously. I thought he had a real good pace to himself today. He played the point. It allows Dev to move off the ball, gives him more opportunities to drive it from the wing and get some shots from the wing. He just doesn't seem to rattle at all. I just felt really good with him in the game, and we just left him in there.

I kept asking him if it he was okay because I was worried about fatigue. Basabe was playing great. I took him out. McCabe was playing great.

I took him out. Aaron White was tired, and I took him out for a minute, but I just left Clemmons in there.

Q. You switched the zone and kind of took them out of the rhythm. They were beating you up with dribble penetration. Was that disappointing they were able to do that?

COACH McCAFFERY: It was disappointing because we weren't as sharp -- we clearly weren't as sharp as we were the other night. I think this team is better offensively clearly. But our effectiveness and execution and overall commitment to defending side ball screen action, especially when it's continuous like that, was not what it needed to be for this team.

So that was disappointing. But it was better later, substantially better.

Q. They were able to get a lot of offensive rebounds, I think 15 second chance points in the first half...

COACH McCAFFERY: And 16 points off turnovers in the first half, I think. Normally -- you normally are not down seven. Normally, you're down 17. So they hit a three late. They banked a couple of threes in. We gave them some loose ball recoveries that they laid in. Those kinds of plays, you know, demoralize a team when you're trying to come back.

So for us, I thought, while it was disappointing that it happened, I felt really good about our toughness to overcome it because, when it keeps happening, you feel like, okay, this just isn't our day.

When you have a great defensive possession and they bank a three, great defensive possession, they hit a 40-footer, another great defensive possession, and they bank in another three with a hand in the face, and you say, wow. Then we get a great defensive stop, and the ball rolls, and they get it, and they lay it in.

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Those kinds of plays really wear on you over the course of a game. So, I'm upset that it happened, but at the same time, we showed a lot of courage to come back and get this win. That team was ready.

Q. I think you only had one turnover maybe the last 11 minutes of the game in crunch time.

COACH McCAFFERY: Especially when they came after us late. We got to the free-throw line. We're in the double bonus, which was good. We end up going 38 for 49, but you're right.

Even though I had two guards and three bigs, I had my best ball handling bigs out there.

Q. You mentioned the 49 free throws, and I think you had 50 in your exhibition last Sunday. Is that now kind of like a benchmark for a number you'd like to get in a game?

COACH McCAFFERY: I'd love to get that every game. I don't know if we can count on that every game. I do think it's going to be a point of emphasis where we can drive and throw it inside. It's got to be a combination. It's not all drives, it's not all post feeds, it's a combination of both.

Q. How much does it hurt when you guys are struggling behind the three-point line?

COACH McCAFFERY: It always helps when you're making threes. Pete hit a big one in the first half. Obviously, Clemmons hit a big one. Clemmons and Zach in the second half were huge. I'd like to have made more, but at least we made two very big ones in key situations.

Q. In the exhibition game, you voiced displeasure and thought you got outplayed. Do you think they're coming around, or is there still a little hangover from the preseason?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know. We talk about preseason hype and the professionalism with which we have to attack that. Clearly, it was evident on Friday night.

It's easy to say that it wasn't evident today, but when you do that, you lessen what your opponent was able -- our opponent was able ready to play, and they played an incredibly good game, and I want to make sure they're recognized for that.

We can sit there and talk about what we should have or could have done. They were making the shots and getting the rebounds, and

they were giving us trouble. So it's all part of the journey.

The key is, like I said last year after the Gardner-Webb game, two years ago, three years ago, we lose this game. We lost to Campbell. We lost to South Dakota State. I'm not saying we're going to win every game like this, but we did what we had to do to win this game. It's on to the next.

Q. Mike, is he okay?

COACH McCAFFERY: He's okay. I think his confidence, he's struggling a little bit with that. You know, I thought he was real tentative shooting the ball, so I talked -- I said, Mike, I need you to be aggressive. Shoot the ball. Drive the ball. Take it to the rim. Shoot your pullup. He's got a great pull-up game.

But then we put him at the point because we wanted Devyn on the wing, like I said a minute ago with Clemmons, and he was missing guys on the break. He was clearly tentative. So that's why we took him out

Q. It seemed like there was one play on defense where he trapped and he could have broke on it, and I think you reacted after that. Was that one where you thought he could have gotten that?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that's an example, Scott, of his tentative nature right now. When he's playing Mike Gesell basketball, he steals it and goes down and dunks it. He's this close. We'll get him straightened out.

Q. Was Devyn feeling okay or just off?

COACH McCAFFERY: He started off missing a couple. He never seemed to get cooking. To his credit, he was smart enough to drive the ball, get to the free-throw line 14 times. I thought he was very instrumental in our win. He didn't shoot it well, you're right.

Q. You just mentioned you had the three big men on the floor who could handle the ball well. I think, combined, Zach and Gabe only had 24 minutes on the floor. Is that part of the reason you didn't have them play as much?

COACH McCAFFERY: The three guys I was talking about were White, McCabe, and Uthoff. I thought Gabe gave us quality minutes when he was out there, but he lost the ball a couple times in a one or two-possession game that

I felt like was going to go back with more shorthanded guys, more experience.

We had the lineup out there where Basabe, Uthoff, and White were playing very well. I thought Melsahn was tremendous today. But I had Zach sitting there. I took Zach out when he got three, but I'm thinking, I've got to get Zach back in. This is a Zach McCabe game. We waited for the appropriate time, which is when Melsahn got tired.

Q. Melsahn came up with huge rebounds late too. He seems to have a leadership quality about him in the post.

COACH McCAFFERY: I thought he was tremendous. He was a presence. Guys coming to the rim, traffic rebounds. I think you're also seeing him handle the ball better. He's so much better off the dribble, making plays. His moves inside are quick. He's going to make his free throws late.

You need your tough guys in a game like this late. He's one of our tough guys.

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