

December 21, 2010



An Interview With:

COACH McCAFFERY

COACH McCAFFERY: Very proud of my team right now. We just beat a very good basketball team. A team that came in here with nine wins. I'll tell you Brown and Ashaolu are as talented a combo as we have had all season long. Ashaolu goes for a double-double in the first half; and I will tell you this, Jarryd Cole's performance, one of the guttiest that I've been around. He was sick all night. We had to put an IV in him at noon. Has not eaten anything in about a day and a half and he gives us a double-double.

And we were down six on the glass at half-time and end up up eight. Melsahn is sick, as well. You can kind of tell that by how he played in the first half. But in the second half three big hoops, some rebounds, two blocks. Proud of him, as well.

What we expected coming into this game against a talented offensive team like this, is we are going to need everybody to come up big, and they did.

Q. You turned things around on the board in the second half, I think they were leading by six at halftime.

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, Melsahn and Jarryd really got after it, and it wasn't just them. And they are a team, Louisiana Tech, who has won games and stayed in games that they have lost with second-chance points. They are really quick to the ball. They scare me because they are a lot like Long Beach State. They just go back and get it; if they don't make it, they go back and get it. You have to be concentrated in your effort to not give them two and three shots a possession.

Q. You mentioned Jarryd being sick; is that something that just started happening today or was that happening?

COACH McCAFFERY: He was up all night.

Q. Any doubt he was going to play?

COACH McCAFFERY: We were unsure. We were -- we put the IV in him to see if he could hold it down and if he could stop throwing up. We tried to get some food in him. He ate a little bit of soup, about two or three bites. That was it. His stomach is killing him right now. But I still think he feels pretty good.

Q. What do you think of your team right now, a lot of confidence; do you like the direction you're going?

COACH McCAFFERY: I like the direction. You always look back and think, we could have been a few better. I don't know if anybody looks at their record that's not undefeated, and says, boy, we could have been a couple better.

But I think the thing that has impressed me about this team is their fight. We compete; we defend; we battle on the glass. We have out rebounded every team on our schedule but one. We knew that we had to do that.

It's great to see Matt Gatens coming around the way we knew he would. Very impressed. He's got his legs under him now. At the beginning, when he was playing, he didn't have that, and I'm really happy for him.

And we are getting good contribution from a lot of different people.

Q. You mentioned Matt -- being unselfish, 19 of 22 in each of his last two games, sounds like he's taken your instruction to heart?

COACH McCAFFERY: We are going to him and we want him to do that. He's comfortable

with it. He's a team guy. I'm going to tell you this: He took nine -- what did he take -- he took ten shots. That's pretty efficient, 22 points on ten shots.

I've been trying to tell him to take 15 to 18 shots a game. But he's not that kind of player -- he's not going to jack. He's not going to take leaners and guys flying at him. He's going to make plays. And I think, you know, two assists, two turns, usually he's on the positive side, rarely on the negative. He's a player.

Q. You start in the Big Ten next week. Can you comment on the league in general? I'm sure you've seen the teams; it's pretty loaded this year.

COACH McCAFFERY: Everybody knew that. We got our hands full. Illinois is a good team. We'll be ready.

Q. Talk about Cartwright; is he playing the kind of ball that you want him to play?

COACH McCAFFERY: He was awesome tonight. I mean, I thought he controlled the game. They have really good guards and he controlled the game; 19 points, six rebound, seven assists, two turns. Pushed it; 37 minutes; I thought his energy level sustained.

That's the thing you always worry about when you are playing a point guard 37, 38 minutes is can he sustain it. You start looking and see him taking possessions off on defense, and we just don't have that luxury, and I just thought defensively he was really good.

Q. With the -- inaudible.

COACH McCAFFERY: He's not bashful. And he is a guy who can get his own.

You know, I'm going to tell you this: I thought in and of himself, I don't think he took a bad shot. I thought he took a couple quick shots, but I don't think he took a lot of bad shots. I mean, he gets the ball in the lane. We were using him as a cutter, took him off the ball.

We played our other guards up the top and put him off the top, so now when you're going to him, he's going to shoot the ball. He's one of our guys, one of our guys we are going to.

Q. On the defensive end of the court, the turnovers, that seems to be something you're really stressing.

COACH McCAFFERY: Interestingly enough, tonight, we didn't get anything out of our

press. We thought we could. Sometimes you watch a team on film and then you get them up close, and they were quick. They were blowing right through our traps and things like that.

So we didn't get anything out of it. We didn't get anything out of our zone really. We thought we could zone this team. But they put five perimeter players on the floor against the zone and just put out and drove. So it was our man-to-man defense, and I think that's the thing that's most impressive.

Q. Did you say anything to Zach after the game about what happened there towards the end, obviously when --

COACH McCAFFERY: I wasn't happy with it. He knows that. You know, I respect the fact that he was sticking up for his teammate but you've got to be smarter than that. He just lost his composure for a second. He's a great kid and he feels bad about it and didn't hurt anybody and he learned a valuable lesson in a game that we won. So I don't think you'll see him doing that again.

Q. Do you do anything differently now preparing for a team like Illinois?

COACH McCAFFERY: You know, it's not like we can start changing our offense or our defensive concept now. We'll kind of do the same things. We'll add some things as we go along because every one of our game is on the Big Ten Network. So you don't want to keep running the same things over and over and over. We'll add a little bit here and there. But, you know, it's more about execution than it is about surprising the other team.

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