

December 3, 2011



An interview with:

COACH McCAFFERY

Q. Can you talk about Marble's play today?

COACH McCAFFERY: He was great, his energy level, his overall effectiveness. I mean, he was seemingly involved in every play, defensively he was great. He was on the glass. He made shots, he played smart. He made good decisions with the ball. He worked without the ball. I thought he was great today.

Q. Is he your most improved player from last year, do you think?

COACH McCAFFERY: I thought he was pretty good last year. I think he made the progress that I would have expected him to make because he's a great kid and he's a hard worker.

Q. Mel had better stats today. Were you pleased with what you saw?

COACH McCAFFERY: I was pleased because of his energy level, he got ten rebounds. He was close in and missed a couple of shots I think he would normally make, but he's getting closer to feeling comfortable. But he was posting hard. I thought our guys did a good job looking for him.

Q. Do you think he was frustrated after a couple of those lay-ups? Was it good to see him after that get a few dunks in?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, it was. He's typically a really good shooter in terms of jump hook. He's got that jump hook move. He couldn't get it out of his hand a couple times. But he was

really aggressive, he was quick, he was quick off the floor. I thought defensively he was really good.

So he got a double-double, but he had a complete game, and I think it was important for him to do that as well.

Q. Overall, is it a good thing going into next week?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, we need to play better. We really hadn't played well for the better part of four games. We had problems at both ends of the floor. All you do is work hard to fix them and correct them and get better.

Like I said, we've got good kids. They're going to try to do what we ask them to do. We're better than we were playing, and hopefully that will continue.

Q. You have seven players that scored at least eight points and other pretty good categories. Is it good to just get everybody involved?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that's the way our team is going to be. We have a lot of good players. We have a lot of players that are capable of scoring. We have a lot of different guys that can make a three or post-up, so I wasn't surprised to see those numbers the way they were.

I think the big thing for us is the rebounding numbers. Now they're a perimeter team. I don't want to over analyze that number, but still we had been struggling on the glass. We rebounded well, and they're a three-point shooting team, and we got after the three-point shooters 4 for 22.

I've seen this team make 12, 11, 10 a number of times. It's hard to beat teams when they make 10 or more threes, and we couldn't allow them to do that and we didn't.

Q. They seemed to have a little trouble shooting the ball. How do you approach that?

Is it just getting more shots off? They're getting the shots on the offense.

COACH McCAFFERY: The guys are taking good shots and they're working on their own time. I don't worry about it. It will work itself out.

Q. What about containing offensive rebounds? How did you guys use your size to your advantage?

COACH McCAFFERY: We worked on throwing it in there. We ran the break and got it in in our set plays. We didn't quick shoot the ball. That would be a problem for us in both the Clemson and Creighton losses. We just started jacking them up there and we fell behind a little bit.

So we had a little better mix of inside and out, and a little more focus on getting the ball in.

Q. The press was effective today too?

COACH McCAFFERY: The press was very effective. I think when you're playing a team -- I mean, Jesse's a terrific coach. I've known him a long time. He knows what he's doing. He's got a guard-oriented team. If you let them just walk it up and start running their stuff, they're going to be hard to guard.

You've got to just get after them and make them work a little bit harder and wear them down a little bit, and that's what we were able to do.

Q. It seemed like your intensity at the start of the game waned a little bit, but at the start of the second half, you really got after them. Was that good to see?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, they cut it to 14 right at the end of the half. We got a chance, got the ball back, up 16 with the ball going for a lay-up to go up 18. Instead they come down and score, so we got after them at the start of the second half. I thought that was good.

We had that one stretch where we had it over 20 and they got it back to 14. We started trading with them there. You don't want to trade with them. You want to extend it a little bit. So what we had was a young team at that particular time that was really tired. So I had to go back with the experienced guys and get it back up.

Q. You said something to Mel when he left the game. Do you remember what you said the last time?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't think it was anything intuitive or anything. Just, good job, big fella, or something like that. He's a special young

man. He's a good player, and he knows he's struggling, and he knows he needs a game like this.

It was good for him to go out there and have some fun again. He was smiling again. He's always been that way. He's always smiling and having fun playing basketball. It's been a struggle for him, and he's been frustrated by it.

But we've stayed positive with him, just kept working with him. Bring him in for film, get him on the court, extra work, push him in practice, and he'll just keep plugging away for you.

Q. How much do you feel that success that he had that you just touched on rubbed off on everybody else especially early on?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think when he's playing that way we're a better team, everybody settles down a little bit. There is not as much pressure on our jump shooters.

Q. Is this team ready to go to places like Northern Iowa, and Iowa State now?

COACH McCAFFERY: We're going to find out pretty soon. Tuesday night we're playing a terrific, terrific team. I've been very impressed. Haven't really watched them yet other than I've watched their scores and seen some highlights obviously just getting ready for Brown.

But different guys scoring and young guys contributing and experienced guys doing what they've always done. So it's going to take a great effort to go up there and win.

Q. How about the intensity of these interstate games you're going to have next week?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that's what college basketball is. It's what you look for in those kinds of games and that kind of intensity level. It's a great opportunity for us to test where we are before we go into Big Ten play.

Q. Can you give us an assessment of Matt Gatens, and what you've seen over time with him and what makes him the special player he is?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think what makes him special is character and work ethic. He's obviously talented. He can shoot the ball, but he's a terrific defender. He gets in there on the glass. He's a winning player. He knows what to do,

where to go. He give it's up, and he just keeps battling.

I don't ever ask for perfection, but I want them to strive for perfection, and he does that. He is a worker, and it's nonstop. It's on his off days, in the summer, and I think that's why he's special.

Q. Is Gabe Olaseni feeling okay?

COACH McCAFFERY: Gabe's got like a hip flexor. Hurt himself yesterday, hurt his hip.

Q. Sometimes the road can bring the us against the world mentality. Now your first true road test is coming up Tuesday, do you feel that may actually help your guys?

COACH McCAFFERY: I hope so. I think that's happened. It happens. You pointed it out. Hopefully that will be a good thing for us to go on the road and really focus to play a really good team with a terrific coach.

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